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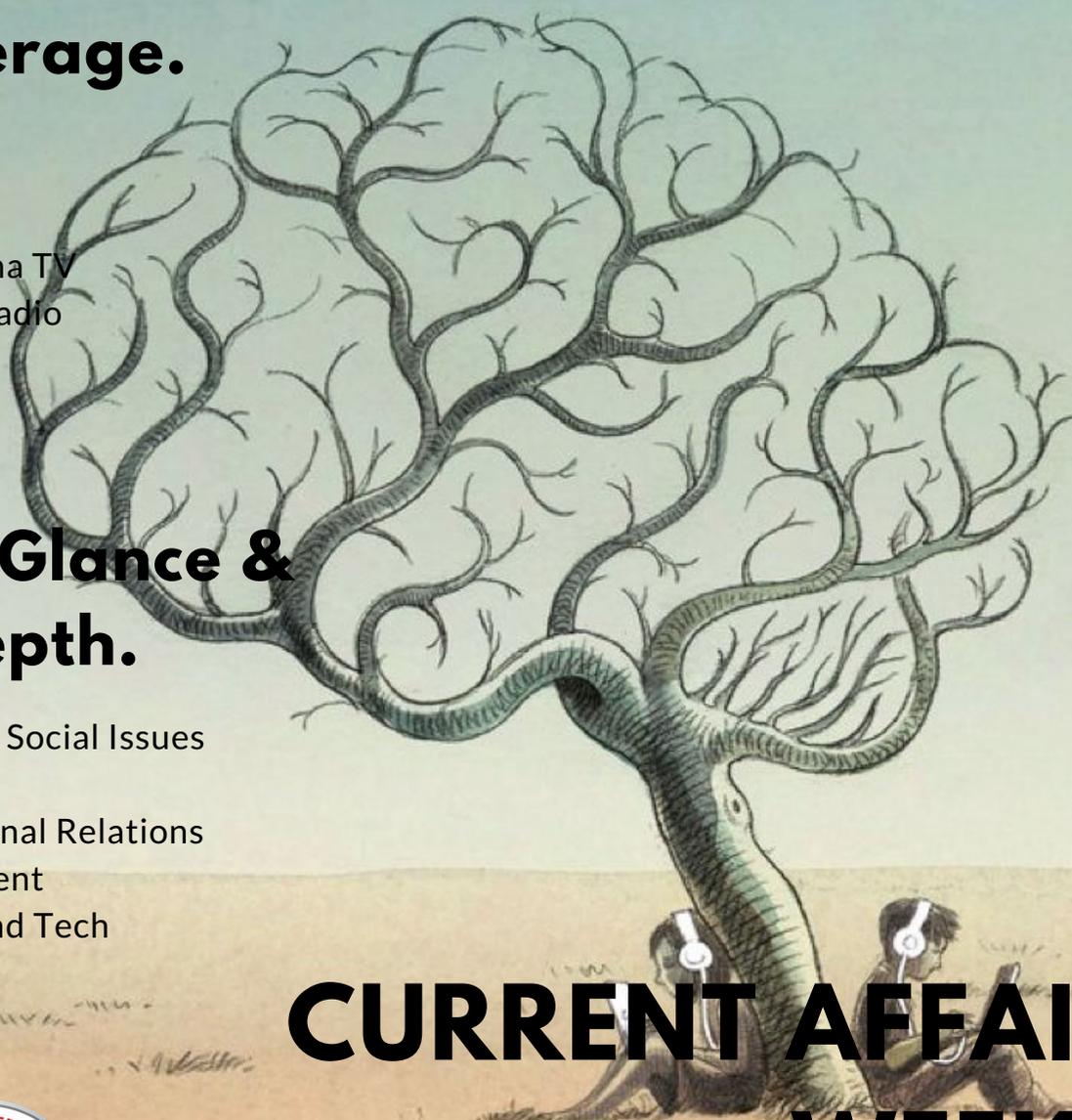
ISSUE NO.11 | 19TH AUGUST TO 25TH AUGUST

Coverage.

The Hindu
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At a Glance & In Depth.

Polity and Social Issues
Economy
International Relations
Environment
Science and Tech
Culture..



CURRENT AFFAIRS WEEKLY

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



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News @ a glance

Polity & Social Issues

Operation Karuna

What is Operation Karuna?

- It is the air-rescue operation in the flood-hit Kerala conducted by the Indian Military.
- The Indian Air Force was instrumental in the supply of relief material for flood survivors by air in Kerala, operating from its headquarters at Trivandrum.
- Besides supply of material, it also aided in air lifting of stranded people to safer places.

Background

- The past week was a disaster in Kerala with floods bringing the state to a standstill.
- In this light, many organizations, teams from central, state and other state governments actively contributed to the relief operations in cash, kind and personnel.
- More than 300 people have died and close to 5 lakh people were given shelter in relief camps



Fundamental right to retire

What's in the Fundamental right to retire?

- Under Rule 56 of the Uttar Pradesh Fundamental Rules as amended, an employee has unfettered right to seek voluntary retirement by serving a notice of three months to the state government.
- Allahabad HC, in this regard, upheld that employees have the right to retire voluntarily as per the provisions under Rule 56.

Background

- Dr. Achal Singh was working as a joint director in Medical, Health and Family Welfare, and other members of the Provincial Medical Services filed an application seeking voluntary retirement.

- The high court had allowed their writ petitions and treated the doctors to have retired voluntarily on the dates specified.
- Though the High Court allowed Ms. Singh to retire, it rued the way government doctors were seeking voluntary retirement almost every day in the State.
- The High Court said the government healthcare sector needed senior doctors as they were "absolutely necessary to run the medical services which are part and parcel of the right to life itself."

Latest development

- When a plea was filed by the state government in the SC against the above-mentioned Allahabad HC order, the apex court reversed the High court order stating that 'the right to save lives is above the right to retire'.
- By this the Supreme Court has effectively ruled that the State can stop government doctors from availing voluntary retirement.

Significance of the ruling to health sector

- Loss of specialized and experienced doctors would only put more pressure on the healthcare infrastructure, which already suffers from lack of adequate doctors.

Constitutional Backing

- The CJI said that the right to retire has to be "interpreted with the rights of the State government... As it is obligatory upon the state government to make an endeavour under Article 47 (of the Constitution) to look after the provisions for the health and nutrition of the people
- Article 47 of the Constitution says that it is the duty of the State to raise the level of nutrition and the standard of living and to improve public health.
- Referring to Article 51A, the court said that it is the fundamental duty of every citizen to have compassion and humanism for living creatures and it can't be done by depriving the poorest of the poor essential

medical services and to leave them at the mercy of the doctors

- The right to practise a profession under Article 19(1)(g) was subject to the interest of the general public, said the SC judges

Data Localisation Law

What is data localization?

- Data localization or data residency law requires data about a nation's citizens or residents be collected, processed, and/or stored inside the country, before being transferred internationally.
- Also, it is required to be transferred only after meeting the local privacy or data protection laws, such as giving the user notice of how the information will be used and obtaining their consent.

What is Data Sovereignty?

- Data sovereignty is the concept that information which has been converted and stored in binary digital form is subject to the laws of the country in which it is located.
- Data localization builds upon the concept of data sovereignty that regulates certain data types by the laws applicable to the data subject or processor.
- While data sovereignty may require that records about a nation's citizens or residents follow its personal or financial data processing laws, data localization goes a step further in requiring that initial collection, processing, and storage occur first within the national boundaries.
- In some cases, data about a nation's citizens or residents must also be deleted from foreign systems before being removed from systems in the data subject's nation.
- India aims to bring in stringent laws in the field.

Why in the news?

- Fearing that it might hurt their business interests in India, American companies such as Amazon, American Express, Microsoft have protested Indian proposals on data localization.
- Data localization would enable increased government surveillance in their activities and may damage their business.
- Already the economic relations between the two countries are strained and this would aggravate the situation.
- In the India-US summit to be held in September, this issue will be highlighted.

Companies have already voiced their concerns with the Prime Minister's Office.



NDRF aid

What is NDRF?

- The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) is a specialised force constituted "for the purpose of specialist response to a threatening disaster situation or disaster" under the Disaster Management Act, 2005. The Chairman of the NDMA is the Prime Minister.
- The Apex Body for Disaster Management in India is the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA).

Why in the news?

- As the floods in Kerala has caused immense damage to life and property, bringing the entire state to a full halt, the state government had requested the centre for aid in order to address the issues.
- In this context, as per the policy of the National Disaster Management, States are required to provide disaster relief from their respective State Disaster Response Funds (SDRFs), and additional assistance will be provided from the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) only for a calamity of severe nature.
- However, there are no constitutional provisions to declare a natural disaster even though of severe intensity as a national calamity.

NSCN

National Socialist Council of Nagaland

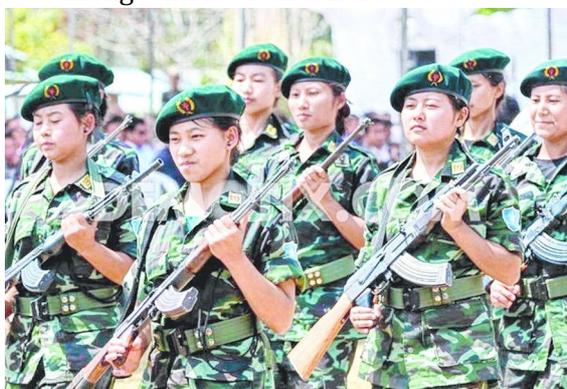
- The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (abbreviated NSCN) is a Greater Naga Revolutionary, Christian Naga nationalist insurgent group operating mainly in Northeast India, with minor activities in northwest Myanmar (Burma) until 2012.
- The main goal of the organisation is to establish a sovereign Naga state, "Nagalim", which would consist of all the areas

inhabited by the Naga people in Northeast India and Northwest Myanmar.

- According to the NSCN manifesto, their slogan is "Nagaland for Christ". The group is accused of kidnapping, assassination, forced conversion and committing terrorist activities.
- It split into two groups: NSCN(K) led by Khaplang and the other as NSCN(I-M) led by Isak and Muviah.
- NSCN(K) has been hostile to the Indian government and is confirmed to have committed terrorist activities in Indian soil.

Why in the news?

- As a result of 'removing any Indian element' in the NSCN(K), a reference to those who were born in India in the group, the group impeached its chairman Konyak for supposed violation of party discipline along with several others.



School Dropout rate

School Dropout

- In India, it primarily refers to the discontinuation of schooling by children due to various socio-politico-economic factors.
- It results in denial of a chance to improve the quality of life of the individual concerned.

Why in the news?

- Due to the wrong proposal of the NITI Aayog mooted by the HRD Ministry to close public schools that have low enrolment rate or single teachers in tribal districts, dropout rates have increased.
- This is in contravention to Right to Education.
- Further combined with decreased allocation by the government in the education field, the tribal people seem to have been excluded from access to education.

Cleaning up politics

What's in the news?

- Expressing displeasure over the presence of crooks and criminals in political parties, the Supreme Court proposed that the Election Commission mandate that new members of political parties declare their criminal history (if any) in an affidavit.

Significance

- Such a disclosure will make the public more aware of the criminal backgrounds (if any) of the contestant. Failure to do so could lead the EC to derecognize the party/ not allot the party its symbol in elections.

NOTA for RS polls

What is NOTA?

- It stands for 'None Of The Above' and refers to the choice given to a voter should the voter find all the candidates for election to the voter's constituency unacceptable/unfavorable.

Background:

- The Election Commission had introduced the concept of NOTA in the Rajya Sabha elections and had issued circulars to the effect. This was challenged in the Supreme Court by the Gujarat Congress whip Shailesh Parmar to do away with the option in Rajya Sabha elections.

Why in the news?

- The SC struck down the EC's direction to include NOTA in RS elections and instructed the EC to act within the frames of the law.

SC's observation

- The SC observed that the NOTA option is applicable in direct elections which is based on universal adult suffrage (Lok Sabha, State Assemblies) and not in proportional representation based on the principle of single transferable vote (as is in Rajya Sabha).
- Noting that party discipline and purity of democracy are core issues in electoral processes, the SC ruled that the NOTA provision dilutes these concepts and opens the flood gates for defection and corruption, and hence harms the electoral process.

Ban on firecrackers

Background

- In the light of various petitions submitted before the Supreme Court seeking country wide ban on the use and sale of firecrackers

on the account of air pollution cause by it, the court sought the central government's opinion in the regard.

Why in the news?

- The centre with important firecracker manufacturing states such as TN responded that while restrictions can be made for bursting crackers and switching over to green crackers would be possible options, it is not possible to put a complete ban on firecrackers in the country.
- TN pointed out that even the exercise of breathing contributed to air pollution.
- The centre had devised a plan to curb pollution due to bursting crackers especially during Deepavali that included non-usage of toxic materials like lead, arsenic, Sulphur, etc., working together with pollution control boards, central research/scientific institutes, etc.



International Labour Organisation (ILO)

ILO

- The International Labour Organization (ILO) is a United Nations agency dealing with labour problems, particularly international labour standards, social protection, and work opportunities for all.
- The ILO has 187-member states: 186 of the 193 UN member states plus the Cook Islands are members of the ILO.
- The ILO registers complaints against entities that are violating international rules; however, it does not impose sanctions on governments.

Why in the news?

- The ILO report highlighted the various wage inequalities (rural-urban, gender, regular-casual).
- One-third of all of wage workers were paid less than the national minimum wage.
- This includes 41% of all casual workers and 15% of salaried workers.
- It also reported India's labour share has declined over the years.

- It showed that while inequalities are narrowing, they are still high as per international standards.



NCRB on sexual violence

NCRB

- The National Crime Records Bureau, abbreviated to NCRB, is an Indian government agency responsible for collecting and analysing crime data as defined by the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- NCRB is headquartered in New Delhi and is part of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Government of India.

Why in the news?

- Sexual violence has increased exponentially in frequency and intensity in recent years in India. To contain this problem, a high-level meeting was convened to chalk out ways to prevent sexual violence against women and children.
- In this context, NCRB will monitor complaints received on a government portal that records child pornography and sexual violence videos.
- It will work with service providers such as Facebook, YouTube, etc. and ask them to block malicious videos and contents.

Getting tough with FB, YouTube

- In order to stop the cybercrimes of child pornographic videos, videos showing rape/gang rape, the Supreme Court had issued directions to the Home Affairs ministry to block such content and report its sources.
- In this regard, the government has issued instructions to public platforms/ social media regarding reporting and blocking such incidents.
- However, Facebook has partially complied but YouTube and WhatsApp have not.

Fake news through WhatsApp

Background

- As fake news has caused a series of serious issues in India even leading to murder/lynching, government is trying to

create ways to curb the spread of such false rumours/fake news.

Why in the news?

- Disagreeing with the government of India on the issue of traceability of messages by pointing out that such an exercise compromises on privacy protection and is bad for business, WhatsApp suggested ways to combat fake news and reaffirmed its commitment of protection of data/privacy.

Punjab's law on sacrilege

Background

- In order to prevent insulting/disrespecting religious sentiments (sacrilege), the Punjab govt. is tabling a bill to deter it by making such an act punishable by life imprisonment.

What it means?

- The law calls for anyone who insults the religious texts of Guru Granth Sahib, Bhagavad Gita, Quran, Bible with the intention to hurt people's religious beliefs.

Why in the news?

- The bill, if it receives the president's assent becomes a law.

Significance

- Such a law could be counterproductive as it could be used as a tool for scoring political and religious differences and curb the right to freedom of expression rather than protect religious sentiments.



Overseas UDAN

UDAN

- UDAN-RCS, UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik) is a regional airport development and "Regional Connectivity Scheme" (RCS) of Government of India, with the objective of "Let the common citizen of the country fly", aimed at making air travel affordable and widespread, to boost inclusive national economic development, job growth and air

transport infrastructure development of all regions and states of India to the maximum extent possible.

What is Overseas UDAN?

- According to this central government proposal, State Governments can offer subsidy to domestic airlines for 3 years by identifying the proposed international routes.
- Then the Airports Authority of India (AAI) will determine a subsidy amount per seat and invite bids from domestic carriers.
- The airlines will then submit their proposals, which will include the routes they wish to connect as well as the subsidy needed by them.
- The airlines will bid on the percentage of flight capacity for which they require financial assistance up to 60% of the flight capacity. The entity that quotes the lowest amount will be awarded subsidy for a particular route.
- The government will grant financial aid only for the actual number of passenger seats that are unsold, even if the airline had sought subsidy for a higher percentage of seating capacity at the time of bidding.
- The airline which was awarded a particular route will have exclusive rights to a subsidy on that route for 3 years.

Difference between UDAN and Overseas UDAN

- The main difference between this scheme and the regional connectivity scheme (RCS) for domestic routes is that there is no capping of fares (in RCS, fares are capped at INR 2500 for one hour of flight on a fixed wing aircraft)
- This move is aimed at encouraging tourism in states.

Aid for Kerala

Background

- Kerala has been hit by unexpected floods that claimed more than 300 lives and caused extensive damage to property.
- Some countries such as Maldives, Qatar, UAE had offered aid.
- India has not taken any foreign aid since 2001 Gujarat earthquake.

Why in the news?

- India has politely refused foreign aid for the Kerala floods saying that it has adequate resources to address the calamity.
- However, donations to the PM/CM Relief Funds by Non-Residential Indians/

Persons of Indian Origin would be most welcomed.

Why this issue arose?

- The debate came when the UAE offered INR 700 crores as aid to Kerala. Actual money offered by different countries far exceeded INR 700 crores and even exceeded the amount released by the centre to Kerala for the floods.



Curbing open urination

What's in the news?

- After the initiative of Open Defecation Free (ODF) under the Swachh Bharat Mission (Clean India Mission), the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs aims to stop Open Urination by providing accessible, clean toilets in public spaces.
- Such an action is expected to bring in behavioural change in the public attitude towards sanitation and cleanliness.

ODF+ status

- ODF+ status will be assigned to those cities which have curbed open urination.

ODF++

- ODF++ status will be assigned to those cities that achieved, apart from open defecation and urination free, manage and treat fecal sludge/matter and sewage without dumping them in drains, water bodies and other open areas.

Economy

NABARD study on farm indebtedness

NABARD

- National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) is an apex development financial institution in India, headquartered at Mumbai with regional offices all over India.
- The Bank has been entrusted with matters concerning policy, planning and operations in the field of credit for agriculture and other economic activities in rural areas in India. NABARD is active in developing financial inclusion policy.

Why in the news?

- A recent survey by NABARD has found that more than 50% of agricultural households have outstanding debt

Agri-loans

- Agriculture loans are taken in order to fulfill various expenditure due to capital, consumption and other factors.

Findings

- In these households, at least one member of the household is a self-employed member in agriculture and received at least INR 5000 from agricultural produce irrespective of possession of land
- More than 50% of these households have outstanding debt, where the loan amount is roughly equal to their annual income.
- Most indebted households are located in Telangana, AP, Karnataka, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, TN, Kerala and Odisha.



Facing action for NPAs

Background

- The Public Sector Banks are reeling under huge losses as a result of accumulated Non-Performing Assets with them. This has been aggravated by Bank Frauds, resulting in colossal losses to banks.

Why in the news?

- The NPAs with Indian banks have shot past INR 8 lakh crores.
- Chief Executives of Public Sector banks have been asked to examine all NPAs exceeding INR 50 crores for fraud/violations (such as diversion of loan amounts for unstated purposes) and report them, failing which, they would face criminal cases.

Kerala seeks Finances

Background

- As Kerala has been hit by one of the most severe floods in the recent past, a special meeting in the state assembly is scheduled to be held on August 30 to address the issue.

Why in the news?

- The state is contemplating of introducing a cess of 10% on State GST and raise its borrowing limit from the present 3% to 4.5% of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) to mobilize funds for reconstruction and rehabilitation throughout the state.
- Apart from this, a special lottery scheme, request of grant of a package of INR 2600 crore from the centre under MNREGS, requesting the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) to implement long-term schemes for reconstruction of damaged infrastructure and revival of the agriculture and irrigation projects to raise additional funds would be done.

IBC is working!

What is IBC?

- The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC) is the bankruptcy law of India which seeks to consolidate the existing framework by creating a single law for insolvency and bankruptcy.
- It is a one stop solution for resolving insolvencies which at present is a long process and does not offer an economically viable arrangement.
- A strong insolvency framework where the cost and the time incurred is minimised in attaining liquidation has been long overdue in India.

- The code will be able to protect the interests of small investors and make the process of doing business a less cumbersome process.

Why in the news?

- As a result of the implementation of the IBC, it has been possible to recover loans worth INR 50000 crores by creditors from debtors.
- However, issues pertaining to legal matters remain to be addressed.

Trade deficit

Trade Deficit:

- Crudely, it is the condition when imports exceed exports of a country.
- India's share in world trade is very small when compared with China.

Why in the news?

- India's declining exports are a cause for worry, leading to widening of the trade deficit as noted by the Vice-Chairman of NITI Aayog.
- This comes at a time when the rupee depreciated further to 70.32 against the dollar, which should have been ideal for cheap exports.

Way forward

- Economic policy of the country should consider, the trade deficit apart from fiscal deficit as is done by USA, EU, China, etc.



Current Account Deficit

Current Account Deficit (CAD)

- Current Account Deficit is a measurement of a country's trade where the value of the goods and services it imports exceeds the value of the goods and services it exports.
- It is an important indicator of a country's economy's health

Background

- Recent depreciation of the rupee coupled with high oil prices increases India's import bills and hence widen the current account deficit to 2.5% of the GDP.

Why in the news?

- Central government believes that despite rupee depreciation and increased oil prices, the CAD may increase by a mere 10-20 base points as opposed to the projected deficit of 2.5% of GDP.

Reasons for widening of CAD

- Due to increased oil prices, aggravated by a sharp depreciation of the rupee, the current account deficit is expected to increase to 2.5% of the GDP.

Result of widening CAD

- As a result of this, while exports may become competitive, problems such as inflation due to higher import bill driven by oil purchases may arise.



Clean banking

What is it?

- It refers to the shrewd approach by banks to business in the wake of increased liabilities in the form of Non-Performing Assets.

Why in the news?

- To tackle with major problems with banks-twin balance sheets/ Non-Performing Assets, banks have adopted several measures to cut down losses and create a more thriving banking sector in the country.
- This is being achieved by adopting EASE (Enhanced Access & Service Excellence) approach by banks, the 4 Rs -- Recognition, Recapitalization, Resolution, and Reform, implementation of Asset Quality Review and Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code.
- All these measures have cut the losses down due to NPAs, by a huge amount besides laying down procedures to deal with defaulters/ insolvents.

Weak Rupee vs. Strong Dollar

Background

- As a result of the rupee's depreciation against the dollar crossing below INR 70/USD, there has been increased concern about the rupee's performance in the global financial market.

Why in the news?

- The strengthening of the dollar in the global market against other currencies is leading to its appreciation, rather than the bad performance or effects of domestic economic policies on the rupee.
- Despite the dollar becoming stronger, the rupee still performed better than emerging economies such as Brazil, Russia, Argentina and Turkey and the Indian economy is likely to experience robust growth.

Falling rupee

What does it mean?

- It refers to the latest trend of depreciation of the Indian currency against the US Dollar
- It has implications for every individual and for the country.

What it means for Exports/Imports

- The main features of a declining rupee mean that Indian exports are now competitive and hence it benefits exporters, bringing in valuable foreign exchange.
- It also means that now imports will become more expensive.

Is this good?

- Not necessarily. For countries like India, that has a trade deficit primarily due to huge oil imports bill, this can increase prices of commodities due to the cascading effects and trigger inflation.

Other impacts

- Aside from these, foreign trips are now more expensive but influx of tourists to India and domestic tourism may rise, higher costs of goods and services.
- However, as a result of robust exports, more jobs may be created leading to an increase in employment.



US-China Trade War - update

Background:

- Recently the USA and China have been involved in a trade war imposing tariffs on the other country's products in their own country.

Why in the news?

- Expressing strong concerns regarding the tariffs slapped on Chinese items on US soil, a wide body of representatives brought to the notice of the Trump administration that the tariffs could potentially harm US's interests by triggering steep price rises that can affect even ordinary American citizens.
- Some rare minerals were imported from China and such tariffs will affect the imports of them into USA and thus affect supplies.

Credit registry

What is a credit registry?

- It is a database that provides the entire route of a financial transaction from source to destination.

Why in the news?

- Such a registry will enhance operations as the lenders will have full knowledge of the borrower's financial credibility, enabling them to better sanction loans and avoid the risk of NPAs.
- It would also enable the lender to monitor the financial health of the borrower for the entire duration till the loans are repaid.

Mobile Banking

What is mobile banking?

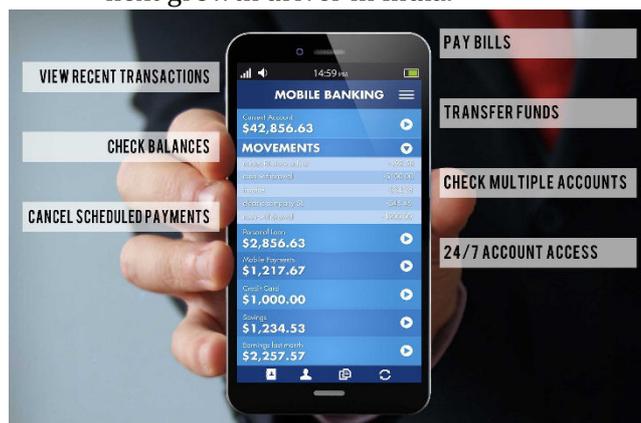
- Mobile banking is a service provided by a bank or other financial institution that allows its customers to conduct financial transactions remotely using a mobile device such as a smartphone or tablet.
- Unlike the related internet banking it uses software, usually called an app, provided by the financial institution for the purpose.
- Mobile banking is usually available on a 24-hour basis. Some financial institutions have restrictions on which accounts may be accessed through mobile banking, as well as a limit on the amount that can be transacted.
- Transactions through mobile banking may include obtaining account balances and lists of latest transactions, electronic bill payments, and funds transfers between a customer's or another's accounts.
- Some apps also enable copies of statements to be downloaded and sometimes printed at the customer's premises; and some banks charge a fee for mailing hardcopies of bank statements.
- From the bank's point of view, mobile banking reduces the cost of handling transactions by reducing the need for

customers to visit a bank branch for non-cash withdrawal and deposit transactions.

- Mobile banking does not handle transactions involving cash, and a customer needs to visit an ATM or bank branch for cash withdrawals or deposits.
- Many apps now have a remote deposit option; using the device's camera to digitally transmit cheques to their financial institution.

Why in the news?

- A report made by The Boston Consulting Group, the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and The Indian Banks Association found that South Indian States performed better than the rest of the Indian states in the usage of mobile banking facilities.
- The Indian average is about 3.40% (at least one financial transaction on mobile banking in the last six months of FY18, as a percentage of total active savings bank accounts (FY18)), Telangana scored the top post at 10%, Kerala at 4.70%, the rest South Indian states were in between these two.
- The report found that Mobile banking activation is at 21% for private banks and at 3% for public sector banks for this financial year.
- The report's theme was "Providing financial services to SMEs in an increasingly digital ecosystem".
- There is huge untapped potential in digital lending to MSME, which is touted as the next growth driver in India.



Menace of Multiple PANs

PAN Card

- Permanent Account Number (PAN) is a code that acts as an identification for individuals, families and corporates (Indian and Foreign as well), especially those who pay Income Tax.

- It is a unique, 10-character alpha-numeric identifier, issued to all judicial entities identifiable under the Indian Income Tax Act, 1961. The Income Tax PAN code and its linked card are issued under Section 139A of the Income Tax Act. It is issued by the Indian Income Tax Department under the supervision of the Central Board for Direct Taxes (CBDT) and it also serves as an important proof of identification.
- It is also issued to foreign nationals (such as investors) subject to a valid visa, and hence that PAN is not acceptable as a proof of Indian citizenship.

Why in the news?

- Since PAN card is used for financial transactions over INR 50000, it was found that many individuals used multiple PAN cards to avail huge loans without the means to repay them and hence were credit unworthy, leading to accumulated losses to banks.
- This was also one of the main reasons for the increase in Non-Performing assets in banks.
- To address the issue, it was suggested that a PAN Aadhaar linkage would eliminate credit unworthy people from securing loans.
- It could also prevent tax evasions due to usage of multiple PAN cards.

GDP back series

GDP Back series

- The government moved to a new base year of 2011-12 from the earlier base year of 2004-05 for national accounts
- In the new series, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) did away with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at factor cost, and adopted the international practice of valuing industry-wise estimates as gross value added (GVA) at basic prices and removing subsidies.

Changes in data

- With the move to the new base year, the growth rate of the economy for 2013-14 was estimated at 6.9%; it was 4.7% on the 2004-05 base. Similarly, the growth rate for 2012-13 was revised upwards to 5.1% from 4.5%.

Background

- As differences have arisen and the debate continues as to which regime clocked higher economic growth, a recent draft of a report of the National Statistical

Commission reveal that the highest growth rate was achieved during the Manmohan Singh's govt in 2011 at 10.08%.

Previous growth rates

- The average GDP at factor cost was 8.87% during UPA-I (2004-05 to 2008-09), and 7.39% during UPA-II (2009-10 to 2013-14)
- In contrast, average growth rate in the first four years of the NDA government (2014-15 to 2017-18) was calculated at 7.35%.
- In 2006-07, during the UPA I rule, growth reached 10.08% then fell to 7.16% in 2008-09, as the global financial crisis affected financial markets and economies.
- In 2012-13 and 2013-14 — the last two years of the UPA government — growth rate fell to 5.42% and 6.05% respectively

Why in the news?

- Contending that the report was not yet official and the official statement shall be made by September 30th, the govt. has sought comments from the public so as to check for any discrepancies.



International Relations

BIMSTEC FTA

What is BIMSTEC?

- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is an international organisation of seven nations of South Asia and South East Asia, housing 1.5 billion people and having a combined gross domestic product of USD 2.5 trillion (2014).
- The BIMSTEC member states: Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan, and Nepal are among the countries dependent on the Bay of Bengal.
- Leadership is rotated in alphabetical order of country names. The permanent secretariat is in Dhaka.
- Fourteen priority sectors of cooperation have been identified and several BIMSTEC centres have been established to focus on those sectors. A BIMSTEC free trade agreement is under negotiation.

Why in news?

- A high-level interaction between representatives from member nations lamented the lack of clarity and delay in implementing a free trade agreement between member nations even though the proposal was mooted way back in 2004.
- The proposed free trade agreement and necessary infrastructure could boost economic development amongst member nations from the current 7% to 21%.
- Hence, when the heads of member nations meet later this year, it was suggested that the issue be made a high priority.
- The meeting also expressed concerns about the threat of terrorism in the region.



Sikkim in the dark on Doklam

Doklam

- Doklam or Zhoglam or Donglang is an area with a plateau and a valley, lying between China's Chumbi Valley to the north, Bhutan's Ha Valley to the east and India's Sikkim state to the west.

- It has been depicted as part of Bhutan in the Bhutanese maps since 1961, but it is also claimed by China.
- To date, the dispute has not been resolved despite several rounds of border negotiations between Bhutan and China. The area is of strategic importance to all three countries.

The Doklam Issue

- In June 2017 a military standoff occurred between China and India as China attempted to extend a road on the Doklam plateau southwards near the Doka La pass and Indian troops moved in to prevent the Chinese. India claimed to have acted on behalf of Bhutan, with which it has a 'special relationship'. Bhutan has formally objected to China's road construction in the disputed area.
- The state in India with closest proximity to Doklam is Sikkim and any action in Doklam has direct consequences on Sikkim.

Why in the news?

- The Chief Minister of Sikkim, Pawan Chamling expressed his concerns on the behalf of Sikkim about the Doklam incident and the developments after that saying that the people were kept in the dark, living in fear should tensions between India/Bhutan and China escalate.
- Stating that the state desires peace with all those involved, siding with West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee on the Darjeeling issue and recognizing the threat of Maoists from Nepal, he said that these were issues all of which affect Sikkim and believed that the central government is doing its best to resolve the issue with China.

India - China military relations

Background

- India and China's militaries have a history of hostility and have even gone to war (1962).
- Both are suspicious of the other's motives. Hence, it was decided to improve the communication between them to bridge the gap.

Why in the news?

- It was jointly decided to implement the confidence building measures in their totality at the border areas and to improve interactions between the militaries,

- Such exercises include setting up border meeting points of the two armies at various locations, participating in joint military drills/exercises, etc.

TAPI

TAPI Line

- It refers to the proposed construction of a gas line from Turkmenistan, a natural gas rich country to India via Afghanistan and Pakistan (TAPI)
- Such a project would provide natural gas to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

Why in the news?

- Initially it was agreed that the gas would be provided at a cost 55% of the prevailing crude oil price.
- However, with the slump in global energy prices, India wants to renegotiate the price.



Accepting Foreign Aid

Background

- The United Arab Emirates had offered to donate INR 700 crores towards the Kerala floods.

Why in the news?

- Such a proposal by the UAE now has brought about dilemma amongst various quarters as to whether or not the assistance should be accepted.

Previous instance

- Since the 2004 tsunami, India has not accepted any foreign aid from countries for relief and rehabilitation works due to natural disasters. India politely refused US aid back then.

India-Pakistan-China

India-Pakistan-China triangle

- Despite shared history and many similarities between North India and

Pakistan, India and Pakistan ties have been strained by several factors (mainly the Kashmir issue) and the two nations have gone to war multiple times.

- Both are suspicious of the other and Pakistan has given shelter and training ground for terrorists, which has strongly condemned.
- Interestingly, Pakistan-China ties are quite strong and China is considered as Pakistan's all-weather friend.

Why in the news?

- Recognizing that the relations between India and Pakistan are crucial for the stability of Asia in general and South Asia in particular, China has exhorted that the two nations resolve their differences through dialogue and employ confidence building measures.
- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, where both nations were inducted as full members, could provide a platform for the two nations to resolve their differences.

Quad

What is Quad grouping?

- It refers to the grouping of the 4 nations of India, Australia, Japan and USA.
- The 4 countries are concerned about the recent increasingly aggressive stand taken by China in the Indo-Pacific region and hence the group aims to collectively deal with the issues arising out of Chinese actions.

Why in the news?

- They had a meeting where they stressed the need for working together to provide other nations in the region with attractive alternative investments to Chinese investments.

Decisions made

- All were in favour of free, inclusive and open Indo-Pacific region.
- The countries should oppose any Chinese aims of building naval bases in the Indian Ocean Region and the Chinese need to be made understood that mutual cooperation and inclusiveness could help in protecting its interests as opposed to unilateral military exercises. In this regard, the sea and land military capabilities should be enhanced.

Science & Technology

Drone - Start-ups

What are drones?

- An unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), commonly known as a drone, is an aircraft without a human pilot aboard. UAVs are a component of an unmanned aircraft system (UAS); which include a UAV, a ground-based controller, and a system of communications between the two.
- While they originated mostly in military applications, their use is rapidly expanding to commercial, scientific, recreational, agricultural, and other applications, such as policing, peacekeeping, and surveillance, product deliveries, aerial photography, agriculture, smuggling, and drone racing.

How are they controlled?

- The flight of UAVs may operate with various degrees of autonomy: either under remote control by a human operator or autonomously by onboard computers.

Why were they invented?

- Compared to manned aircraft, UAVs were originally used for missions too "dull, dirty or dangerous" for humans.

Current status

- Civilian UAVs now vastly outnumber military UAVs, with estimates of over a million sold by 2015, so they can be seen as an early commercial application of autonomous things, to be followed by the autonomous car and home robots.

Why in the news?

- The Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru is helping startup companies in the design and development of drones for various applications in medical field (transportation of organs, etc.), Space field, Technology (spread of internet to wider areas), etc.

Helium

Helium:

- The second lightest element after hydrogen, it is found in abundance in the Sun.
- It is lighter than air and is found in trace amounts on Earth. It is an inert gas.

Why in the news?

- Helium was discovered by studying of the sun by astronomers on August 18, 1868 while studying a solar eclipse.

- This marks the 150th anniversary of its discovery.
- It was discovered to be present in the sun before it was found on earth.

Chandrayaan-I

What is Chandrayaan-I?

- It is India's first unmanned space mission to the moon launched in 2008.
- While in mission, the spacecraft lost signal contact with ISRO and it was considered as a failure.
- However, NASA had examined Chandrayaan-I and found that the project may not have been a total failure after all.

Why in the news?

- NASA confirmed that Chandrayaan-I detected ice on the moon.
- The ice was detected in both the poles in the cold and dark areas.
- This could be a potential resource for future space exploration by humans.



ISRO

ISRO

- It is the abbreviation for Indian Space Research Organisation and is the agency responsible for India's space missions. It reports directly to the PMO.

Why in the news?

- Noting that key materials (aluminum alloys, beryllium alloys, carbon nanotubes, carbon composites, etc.) were required in further space missions such as the Human Space Programme, reusable launchers, scramjets, etc., ISRO chief K Sivan said that although imports in this field had reduced drastically by developing indigenous capabilities, more research into cost effective and high efficiency materials and large-scale production of such materials were needed.

Environment

Rhino Country

What is Rhino Country?

- It refers to Assam, with its extensive wildlife sanctuaries such as Kaziranga and Manas, aimed primarily at conserving rhinos, which are an endangered species.

Status of Rhino

- The rhino is an endangered species which is mainly threatened due to illegal human activities such as poaching and hunting.
- The horns are supposed to be used in traditional medicine systems such as in China.
- More than 70 cases of poaching were recorded last year.

Why in the news?

- To curb the menace of poaching and better achieve the target to conserve the rhino species, it was decided that the existing Kaziranga reserve be split into two divisions: The existing reserve and the Biswanath Wildlife reserve.



Farms as bird habitats

What's in the news?

- In Meghalaya, the agricultural lands are located close to protected forests, hence are important sites for food for a wide variety of creatures from insects to birds.
- The wooded cultivated areas support more than 100 species of fauna, even though the forests faced deforestation threats.
- It was found that the cultivated wooded lands had more species and their population than protected areas.

Kerala Floods

- Due to unexpected heavy floods in Kerala, enormous damage to life and property was

caused. More than 300 people were killed and some others missing.

- In this context, the following 3 articles give further details with regards to the situation and issues surrounding the floods.

After UAE, Pakistan offers help

- Pakistan conveyed its willingness to provide humanitarian aid to India with respect to the Kerala floods.
- Such a development comes even as India declined to accept the foreign aid given by the UAE.
- Observing that the domestic situation can be dealt with existing resources, India feels that foreign aid is unnecessary at this point.
- India hasn't accepted foreign aid for natural disasters since 2001 Gujarat earthquake, a convention it is keeping till date.

Extreme rainfall a challenge to reservoir operations.

- As a result of global warming, with increased intensity of water inflow due to snow melt/monsoons and consequently causes severe floods as seen in Kerala
- Dams, which serve multiple purposes such as electricity generation through hydel power plants, control flood waters, etc., will be needed from now on as a measure to mitigate flood damages rather than increased electricity production.
- This conclusion was shown by simulations conducted by an IIT Gandhinagar team.

Floods may reduce India's coffee output

- Kerala and Karnataka account for 90% of coffee exports of India.
- Due to the floods with extensive damages reported from the districts of Kodagu, Wayanad and lesser damages reported from Chikkamagaluru, Hassan.
- As these are coffee production areas, lower yields (~20% less) of the crop is expected.



News in-depth

The Hindu Editorials

A Brief History of the Rupee

Why in News?

- The rupee's depreciation to more than 70 to a dollar just ahead of Independence Day led to historical comparisons of the value of the rupee.

Pre-Independence Era

- Britain (and France) declared war on Germany in 1939. In preparation, India's economy was geared up by the colonial government towards the war effort through imposition of controls. The first was the exchange control. Completely convertible into any currency until then, the rupee was made inconvertible. Transferring money outside the sterling area required permission under rules that were laid down in London.
- Dollar securities held by private individuals were compulsorily acquired, and compensation was in rupees at the market price on an arbitrary date, resulting in losses to many. Dollars for the war were also raised by selling silver bullion from India's reserves to governments outside the sterling area
- Dollars could be spent on imports of essential consumables, not capital goods. What was essential was defined by the war requirements until 1946, when civilian requirements were included. The restrictions on capital goods imports continued because the Bank of England had blocked what were called India's sterling balances.
- By the end of World War II, India had accumulated a sizeable sterling balance of £1,300 million — India's earnings in foreign currency on its exports for the war, deposited in the BoE in the form of sterling to the credit of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) account. The balance had grown with

import controls limiting forex outflows. The corresponding increase in rupee circulation stoked war inflation in India.

- After the war ended, the transfer of the sterling balances was negotiated between India and Britain. After August 15, 1947, India and Pakistan would have had no forex other than the sterling balances to pay for imports. The urgency of reaching an agreement increased.
- Under this interim agreement, India could spend from the balances in dollars, as Britain had agreed to make the pound convertible under the terms of a loan from the U.S. But Britain soon repudiated the convertibility clause, in turn altering the character of the agreement entered into with India.
- Finally, The Indian side led by Finance Minister John Mathai, agreed to two types of deductions from the sterling balances. First, towards the pensions of former British members of the ICS. Second, the value of military equipment, regardless of the condition and worth, the British forces had left behind. The subtractions added to £100 million.

Post- Independence

- The sterling was floated against the major international currencies in the early 1970s, the rupee as late as 1993-1994. The two currencies were delinked in 1975.
- India decided to delink the rupee from the pound sterling and link it to a "basket of currencies". Under the new arrangement, the exchange value of the rupee would be determined "with reference to daily exchange rate movements of a selected number of currencies of countries which are India's major trading partners".

Stay with RCEP

Why in News?

- As negotiations on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership,

among 16 Asian and Pacific Ocean countries enter into a decisive phase, the government has decided to set up a group

of four ministers to advise Prime Minister on the path ahead.

About RCEP

- In August 2012, Economic Ministers of 16 countries endorsed the Guiding Principles and Objectives for Negotiating the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.
- The objective of launching RCEP negotiations is to achieve a modern, comprehensive, high-quality, and mutually beneficial economic partnership agreement among the ASEAN Member States and ASEAN's FTA partners
- RCEP will provide a framework aimed at lowering trade barriers and securing improved market access for goods and services for businesses in the region, through:
 - Recognition to ASEAN Centrality in the emerging regional economic architecture and the interests of ASEAN's FTA partners in enhancing economic integration and strengthening economic cooperation among the participating countries;
 - Facilitation of trade and investment and enhanced transparency in trade and investment relations between the participating countries, as well as facilitation of SMEs' engagements in global and regional supply chains; and
 - Broaden and deepen ASEAN's economic engagements with its FTA partners.

Partnering Countries

- The countries include 10 members of ASEAN (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) and their FTA partners (Australia, China, India, Japan, Korea, and New Zealand).
- Together, these countries comprise of three billion people, which is over 45% of

Reality Check: On Simultaneous Polls

Introduction

- Similar to free and fair elections, Continuity, Consistency and Good Governance are integral parts of a Democracy.
- Elections, held at periodic intervals to achieve these principles, should be the way and not the end itself.

the world's population with a combined GDP of about US\$ 17.23 trillion, which is about a third of the world's current annual GDP.

India's Concerns

- China Factor-One of the key concerns for India is the greater access Chinese goods will have to the Indian market, a problem given India's massive trade deficit. To circumvent this, given that India is the one country that doesn't have an FTA with China, the government has proposed a "differential market access" strategy for China, which others are inclined to accept.
- Lowering Customs Duties-The second concern is about demands by other RCEP countries for lower customs duties on a number of products and greater access to the market than India has been willing to provide.
- The more developed RCEP countries such as Australia and Singapore have been unwilling to accommodate India's demands to liberalize their services regime and allow freer mobility of Indian workers.

Way Forward

- Despite these concerns, the government must consider the deeper strategic pitfalls of either slowing down India's RCEP engagement or walking out of the talks at this stage.
- Doing so would cut India out of the rule-making process for the RCEP and give China further space in the regional trade and security architecture.
- At a time when the U.S. has broken from the global concord on multilateral trade agreements, an Indian walkout would endanger the united message that RCEP countries, which represent 40% of the global GDP, would wish to send out.
- It would also be a sharp departure from India's "Act East" slogan and its extended outreach to ASEAN.

- Simultaneous election is one area which has gathered more traction in recent times due to growing number of hurdles towards developments.

Simultaneous Elections (SE)

- Holding State Assembly Elections and elections to the Lok Sabha at the same time.

- It will ensure the above-mentioned principles of a Democracy through the process of elections.
- Currently, local body elections and assembly election of states is conducted in almost every year and political parties are focussed in winning them.
- With the Moral Code of Conduct kicking in every time before the election, it creates a block in developmental activity of the state.

Need for SE

- It helps in curbing corruption and building a more conducive socio-economic ecosystem.
- Frequent elections impose massive burden on resources- both manpower and financial resources.
- On the manpower front, apart from security personnel, government servants and teachers are drawn in at large amount during election period, affecting students directly.
- On resource side, election expenditure ranging in crores could be reduced by holding simultaneous elections once in 5 years.

Recent Developments

- Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) O.P. Rawat ruled out the possibilities of holding out simultaneous elections in the near future.
- Considering the humungous task of man power, technology, logistics and resources, CEC, in particular denied the Governments proposal to conduct simultaneous elections in December.
- Lok Sabha elections and state assembly elections of Mizoram, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan are entering elections in next few months.

Hitting the Road Blocks

- To increase or curtail the tenure of the period of State assemblies, a law in the mode of constitutional amendment is needed.
- Next is the need of massive numbers of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) and Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trial (VVPAAAT) units.
- Ensuring VVPATs availability everywhere poses a logistical challenge.

Sovereignty and Sensitivity: On India-Bhutan Relations

Introduction

- New units of VVPATs are due to arrive only by the end of November.
- It takes a month for first level checking which makes the possibility of using it in upcoming elections minimal.
- It requires use of 24 lakh EVMs, with 12 lakh EVMs and 12 lakh VVPATs needed to be procured.

In a Nut Shell

- In a country like India, starved of funds, such a huge overhaul of the existing system is a challenging task.
- But the recent debate in holding simultaneous election revolves around the two factors-
- The country is perpetually in election mode thereby resulting in a lack of adequate focus on governance.
- Scattered polling results in increased expenditure.

Need of a consensus

- A wide political, as well as legislative co-operation from various parties at the centre and in the states is required.
- Usual trend is the party in power or the ruling party opposes any move of curtailment of the tenure of their elected government.
- On the other hand, opposition parties which are in desperate need of a election in near future, welcomes such move of reduction of tenure of the government.
- So, consensus among all the stake holders is a prerequisite to move any further in holding simultaneous elections.

Conclusion

- Holding simultaneous elections is simply an investment promising rich dividends.
- Investment is the only concern for now, which postpones such exercise for time being.
- With the above challenges, a law which does not undermines the authority of representative democracy and federalism is another important factor to look out.
- Give the factors, it is better to focus on basic electoral reforms now and find ways to curb excessive election expenditure by both the parties and the Government.

- India's relation with neighbours is always volatile except few countries like Afghanistan, Nepal and Bhutan.

- With the rising Chinese power in the Sub-continent, relations with neighbouring countries is evolving and a new approach is required to maintain stable relationship.
- India- Bhutan bilateral relation remained always strong, but Bhutan's concern over India's domination on its external or foreign affairs is growing bigger with the general elections in Bhutan approaching nearer.

Project Dantak

- Border Roads Organisation (BRO) under Project Dantak builds roads in Bhutan.
- The project was raised in May 1961 at Samdrup Jongkar in Eastern Bhutan.
- Under it, roads and telecommunications network and other prestigious works like air field at Paro and Yangphula, number of helipads, Indo-Bhutan microwave link, etc have been completed.
- Over the years, it had constructed around 1500 km of roads and still continuing.

Crossing the Line

- Highway markers like the reflective stickers on railings that guide traffic on Bhutan's steep mountain roads created the issue this time between India and Bhutan.
- Instead of using normal reflective markers, BRO replaced it with the shades of Indian tricolour.
- It had become a serious issue and the social media outraged considering it as Indian imposition on Bhutan's sovereignty.
- Previous cases include BRO planting a board which read, "Dantak Welcomes You to Bhutan" at Paro International Airport and a Government of India Board at Phuentsholing arterial highway.
- All these were removed after reservations from the Himalayan kingdom.

"SSS" Factor

- With the Himalayan nation preparing for the third general elections, its bilateral relation with India became a trump card for all the opposition parties targeting the incumbent Prime Minister.
- Sovereignty, Security and Self-sufficiency is the key principle of the opposition which accuses the current government for compromising them and having a pro-Indian stance.
- The 73^{-day} India-China Doklam standoff in 2017 provides ammunition to the opposition in Bhutan to tear off the current foreign policy of the country.
- They insist of formulating a foreign policy less dependent on India.

- Incumbent PM of Bhutan dispels opposition claims on 'sovereignty' as scaremongering.
- But the concern over India's or any other country's presence in Bhutan's domestic and foreign policy are not dismissed yet.

Stay at Arm's Length

- India must step lightly and thoughtfully with Bhutan keeping in mind with the upcoming elections there.
- In 2013, Government's decision to cut cooking gas subsidy just before 2013 general elections in Bhutan is considered as proof of India's interference.
- With the current government actions favouring one party of a country over other and opposing one party is also closely watched by Bhutan.
- Considering the current accusations of opposition at rallies over the incumbent of holding a pro-Indian stand, it is better for India to keep high-profile visit at an arm's length.
- In fact, there will be more visits after the national assembly under the new government convenes.

Revisiting Policies and Issues

- The following time interval can be used to revise India's Bhutan policy and address several issues that have come up in the past few years ago.
- One among them is the Indian companies constructing hydropower projects in Bhutan.
- Delays in construction by Indian companies have led to Bhutan's increasing debt to India.
- It also leads to increase in cost of power generated by the plant which had to be negotiated in the future to favour Bhutan.

Debt Trapping

- The question of profitability of Bhutan's hydropower sector is growing bigger with India's surplus power status and advent of renewable energies like wind and solar.
- Cross border trade is another area to be focussed.
- Goods and Service Tax still hurts the Bhutanese exporters and demonetisation has left lasting scars on the Banking system.
- All the above needed to be addressed and if helped by India may bring a positive effect over Bhutan.
- Or else India may be accused of 'debt trapping' Bhutan, which already accuses China of the same.

The China Question

- China stands as the common issue in the bilateral relations between India and Bhutan.
- Doklam which was once part of a possible “package solution” to China-Bhutan border dispute has now been a area of dispute between India and China.
- Any stand-off over it in future might reduce the status of Bhutan a mere spectator as it had happened in recent past.
- With India reaching to China through a series of formal and informal visits like Wuhan meetings, its Bhutan turn to improve relations with China.
- The recent visit of China’s vice Foreign Minister to Thimphu in July was an outcome of such change in its stance.

From the Past

- Similar situation occurred in September 1958, when Jawaharlal Nehru undertook the arduous 3-week journey by Yak across the Chumbi valley to meet Bhutan’s third King.

Educating People about Climate Change

Why in News?

- Climate change has the potential to disrupt and reshape lives. Vulnerable populations should be made aware of the potential risks and how to cope with them.

Predictions about the impact of Climate Change

- The UN Sustainable Goals Report, 2018 notes that climate change is among the key factors in rising hunger and human displacement.
- The World Health Organisation estimates that climate change will cause an additional 250,000 deaths per year between 2030 and 2050, due to malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress. Much of this loss will be accounted for by low-income groups in developing nations, including India.
- The World Bank projects that climate change could cost India 2.8% of its GDP, and diminish living standards for nearly half the country’s population, in the next 30-odd years.

Initiatives to Spread awareness

- In 1991, the Supreme Court directed the Central government and all State governments to provide compulsory environmental education to all students in schools and colleges. This directive was reiterated in 2003

- It took place amidst rising tensions with China, but it gave special permission for passage of delegation in Doklam.
- China’s action since last June, to build a permanent military presence above the stand-off point reduces the negotiating advantage, Bhutan has over China.

Conclusion

- Recent Incident of markers in highways was a blip in India- Bhutan relations.
- But it is a clear indication of heightened sensitivities in Bhutan which is heading towards its 3rd general elections.
- In 1960s, Bhutan’s external policy stood clear with China which is neither provocative towards India nor pro-India.
- Similar approach by Bhutan is needed and India should be careful in measuring its steps towards the Himalayan kingdom with China playing all cards to pull its neighbours.

- Corporate organisations, research and education institutes, NGOs and foundations have committed themselves to educating people about climate change and providing the know-how for mitigation, adaptation and resilience building.
- These initiatives target urban and rural populations including school-going children. Their thrust ranges from inculcating the concept of environmental sustainability to driving home the impact of climate change on food, water, nutrition and health.

Major Concern

- Despite these efforts, and the reach of the court’s order, climate change seems to find low importance in everyday lives and conversations. Most of the country’s plans for vulnerable populations are directed towards poverty alleviation, improving living standards, enhancing access to education, sanitation, healthcare and ensuring human rights.

Way Forward

- At present, climate change does not find specific mention in Schedule VII of the Companies Act, 2013. if it were to be articulated and specified as an activity for corporate social responsibility (CSR), rather than be implied in the umbrella term of environmental sustainability,

organisations may be encouraged to view it with increased importance and lend more weight to creating awareness, mitigation and resilience-building.

- Scaling up current initiatives of the corporate and social sectors to regional or national levels. Efforts on this front could

High science with the low development

Why in News?

- There is a need to ensure that the emphasis on advanced technology and science does not dilute the focus on human development in India.

Present Challenges

- Parts of the country are faced with flooding, due partly to water released from dams following exceptional rain.
- Previously the country has witnessed lynching, mostly over a wide swathe of north India from Uttar Pradesh to Jharkhand but not entirely absent in the south.
- Mobs have been attacking persons either on their own or in small groups, with the victims in every case have been unarmed and acting without any provocation.
- The victims have been Dalits and Muslims engaged in the cattle trade, middle-aged single women accused of witchcraft, and migrant labourers allegedly trafficking in children.

The Democratic Agenda: Space Programme Vs Public Policy

- The principal object of public policy in India is the creation of enabling conditions for a valuable life. These conditions result from protecting natural capital, building public goods in the form of physical infrastructure, providing a public education and health service, and creating institutions that support individual aspirations. This is the democratic agenda.
- It is imperative that the democratically elected govt does not lose its focus on the primary objectives of public policy while trying to evoke national prestige in the form of space missions.

The pursuit of high science: Nuclear Power

- The pursuit of high science by the Government of India had started quite early after 1947 when it embarked on a programme of harnessing nuclear energy

be facilitated and amplified by companies' CSR activities.

- The film industry could consider ways to incorporate key aspects of climate change in films, writers could introduce climate change in adult and children's literature, and gaming companies could develop games on this theme.

for peaceful purposes and formed the The Atomic Energy Commission.

- Independent experts at the Indian Statistical Institute point out that nuclear power is costly. It causes pollution and also contributes to global warming and climate change
- However, we need to rely neither on nuclear power or fossil fuel, for we have abundant sunlight in India and some wind power. The cost of generating solar power is also reducing rapidly due to advances in storage technology.
- There is a need for a science policy that is focused enough to monitor and exploit these trends and a government machinery that is both motivated and adept at facilitating a mass transition to cleaner fuel.

A case in point: The Green Revolution

- India's science and technology policy should be oriented to improve the lives of Indians. An example of such a role for science was the launching of the Green Revolution in the mid-1960s.
- The Green Revolution was achieved through a rare combination of scientific leadership in the agricultural sector, administrative ability and political acumen, but above all by the genius of India's farmers.
- Indian agriculture has performed more erratically than usual in the past decade. Given the scale of the public science and technology apparatus in India, especially of agricultural research institutions, a lot can be done through a policy focused on increasing farm productivity through technology and extension services.

Solution to the " Food Problem"

- Development economists recognize that the 'food problem' does not cease once a country is able to produce food in sufficient quantity. It is necessary to produce food at a cost that is affordable to the mass of the population.

- This is fully compatible with a prosperous farming population. What is needed is an increase in the productivity of the land. Despite the recent steps taken by the government to deliver farm price support,

a rise in farm productivity requires a policy focused on technology and extension service in addition to a favorable price mechanism.

For Better Slum Policies

Introduction

- Urbanisation in India is progressing at a faster pace for the past few decades and urban migration added to it makes the administration of urban areas a challenging task.
- A strong vibrant policy solution to create a stable urban area focussing on all class of peoples especially the slum dwellers is yet to be devised by the state.

Why Migration

- Urban migration is where peoples from rural areas and sub-urban migrates towards cities for search of employment and livelihood.
- Monsoon deficit, drought, unemployment and host of other persistent factors favoured once and even now the migration of people from rural to urban areas.
- Urbanisation brings with it the benefits of employment opportunities and a relatively better standard of living for the poor in the rural areas who come in search of it.
- Need of massive low skilled workers for construction, infrastructure developments like railways, roadways, etc creates an opportunity for better living.
- For thousands who come to the cities every day, cheap housing in slums provide shelter.

Slums

- The definition of slums differs from country to country.
- United Nations operationally defined a slum as “one or a group of individuals living under the same roof in an urban area, lacking one or more of the following five amenities:
 - Durable housing
 - Sufficient living area
 - Access to improved water
 - Access to improved sanitation facilities
 - Secure tenure
- In India, a slum has been defined as residential areas where dwelling are unfit for human habitation by reasons of dilapidation, overcrowding, narrowness or faulty arrangement of street, lack of

ventilation or sanitation facilities or any combination of these factors which are detrimental to the safety and health.

Fact check

- India must get its numbers right as there are no concrete figures on these temporary and semi-permanent settlements.
- Studies show that these migrants often get stuck in a vicious cycle of debt and socio-economic stagnation.
- The fluid definition of slums and too much focus on small details as per the definition leads to exclusion of people.
- The 2011 Census estimated 65 million people in slums, whereas the UN-Habitat estimated it to be 104 million in 2014.

Change in Angle

- Current slum policies primarily focus on housing, relocation or in-situ development of multi-storey complexes.
- But the socio-economic distress prevalent in slums is left out, which was revealed in a set of projects conducted in Bengaluru.
- A long-term, multi-institutional survey by researchers from Netherlands, the U.S. and a local NGO, reveals that over 70% of families in slums live in debt.

Neglected Needs

- The difference between the monthly earnings and expenses of people in these slums is less than 1000 rupees.
- Its leaves them vulnerable in case of education, vocational, social or health emergencies.
- No or less access to formal financial systems, forces them to borrow money from private money lenders at high interest rates.
- Drinking water and electricity are disproportionately more expensive for few which force them to rely on grey market rather than on formal, subsidised channels.

Not a Stopover

- Residents who enter slums to dwell temporarily end up staying in the same slums for an average of 21 years, according to a exploratory study helmed by Duke University, U.S.

- 7 out of 10 households have stayed in slums for at least four generations.
- These families earned only marginally more than “newer” migrants.
- Families moving out of these slums get landed in other cheaper, worse-off slums.
- This is in contrast to the rapid upward mobility among other urban sections.

Competitive Society

- Studies in both the slums and other urban sections reveals that there is little upliftment despite better educational levels.
- This is due to the rapidly changing profile of entry level jobs.
- Undergraduate or technical certificates can only provide low-paying jobs.
- This lands youth in the slums earn less than their more-educated peers who don't live in slums.

What Swachh Bharat Abhiyan Ignores

Introduction

- Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (SBA) was an unprecedented nationwide initiative aimed to inspire public to voluntarily clean public places as a service to the nation.
- Launched in 2014, its objective is to accomplish the vision of a clean India by 2019, on the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.
- It is touted to clean the filthiness all around us for promoting the tourism which offers jobs to the poorest of the poor.
- With celebrities sweeping voluntarily, to employing more and more contractual labourers by the municipalities, SBA had been busy in meeting its objective.
- With the core objective to change the sanitation and cleanliness status of the country, non-secular feature of caste-based waste collection still persists.

The Western Approach

- In the 19th century the western countries were the first to formulate a scheme with the primary intention to stop the spread of disease.
- It introduced and adopted technologies to systematically remove waste from the country.
- When Londoners experienced the ‘Great Stink’ in 1858, the government realised that it would need a holistic sewerage plan.
- This plan should also become part of the London water infrastructure, to remove

Holistic Outreach

- In many established slums, political patronage has produced concrete houses, title deeds, piped water and regularised electricity.
- Economic opportunities and employment is the key in these areas.
- On the other end, slums resembling tented refugee camps need housing and basic amenities.

Conclusion

- All areas needed to be focussed in order to provide a better standard of living to the slum dwellers.
- Until these are not neglected, ambitious but slow-to-implement housing schemes of the Government will do very little for the welfare of slum dwellers.

filth and treat waste from the river Thames in a sustainable way.

- Construction of toilets in household and shops became mandatory.

Is India Adopting the Western Model?

- SBA is said to be an uncritical adoption of the 19th century western model of removing waste from the public places.
- But it hardly addresses a reworking of the underground sewerage system.
- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in a reply to the Lok Sabha in December 2017, cited over 300 cases of deaths due to manual scavenging.
- The other part of the concern is that most of the above cited deaths are from a particular caste group.

Hollow Base

- The SBA should frame policies and rules where, punitive measures should make the public to learn where and how one should urinate, defecate and dispose of garbage.
- Instead, the campaign makes it a voluntary act for the public to not defecate, urinate or litter in random spaces.
- It however burdens the contractual labourer with an ‘exclusive’ right to clean public spaces.
- With almost all the contractual labourers hired from particular group of caste, the campaign sets a re-entry to the abolished age-old discriminatory practices.

The Question of ‘Pollution’

- In India, waste carries the stigma that is attached to pollution and caste, as does the process of removal or 'scavenging' and the occupation.
- Even the spaces in which the removal takes place and places of disposal are stigmatised.
- All these are considered to be contaminated by caste pollution.
- Unlike the western countries, the waste remover is not a professional in India but based on the lines of caste.
- So simply stating, in the act of waste removal, stigma lies in the profession, the labour, the space and the body.

Disposal of Waste – Current Mechanism

- The dust bins placed by the municipalities in places of shops and households at regular intervals between the houses were the first to be removed in SBA.
- Instead a door-to-door collection mechanism was placed.
- Workers whistle to announce their presence upon arrival in their designated areas.
- Members of the household bring un-segregated garbage and workers collect those and store them in a designated place.
- From that place it is taken to the composting yard.
- The workers have to go to the yard to segregate the waste.
- Manually segregating the waste at the landfill compromises their hygiene and health.

Rhetoric of the past

- Door to door service reflects the banned practice of dry latrine removal through a similar door-to-door service.
- Until banned in 1993, the municipal servant on arrival would blow a whistle and the respective houses would move away from their toilet bowl or pots.
- The servant would come to empty through an exclusive entrance.
- The whistle does not merely announce the presence of the worker but also the presence of a lower caste body from whom all contact has to be avoided.
- The contemporary whistle echoes older practices, where members of the lower castes had to whistle or make noise, while walking in public places in order to warn caste Hindus from crossing their path.
- Not only the waste, but also the body which carried the waste and the path is also

considered polluted according to the Hindus.

- Toilets built away from living spaces are a clear explanation to such practise in the past and even in the present.

Colonial Architecture

- In Agraharams and even in some non-Brahmanical households, the toilets are constructed at distance, separately from house.
- The exclusive path to the toilet for the scavengers is un-seeable so that the event of scavenging or waste removal by scavengers is completely out of sight for them.
- Colonial architecture like the Indian Institute of Advanced study in Shimla, also called the 'Viceregal Lodge', reflects the same trait.
- It has three entrances: one for residents and guests, one for servants and one exclusively for sweepers and scavengers.
- The sweepers' pathway forms an invisible and intricate network of corridors, stairwells and gangplanks leading to many toilets in the building.
- It does not even intersect with the servants' staircase, explaining the stigma associated with their work.

Carrying the Mindset

- Toilets are not viewed as essential parts of buildings and public architecture in India.
- For instance, the Delhi Metro did not include toilets in all the stations in its original plan.
- Temples usually did not construct toilets and if constructed only away from the boundary.
- All these reflect the age old discriminatory and casteist mindset of the country.

Addressing the Stigma

- There are a lot of similarities between the secular SBA and the casteist form of manual scavenging, but they have gone unnoticed.
- The SBA enables a clear distinction between the cleaning and disposing of waste.
- Here cleaning is a voluntary 'service' for caste Hindus, whereas collecting and disposing waste is a 'duty' relegated to municipal workers from particular castes.
- Stigma attached to sanitary labour, place and waste should be critically addressed to achieve any results towards clean India.
- Caste-neutralising of these professions and also technology adoption are some other

ways to fight the stigma associated with waste removal.

Conclusion

Clearing the Path

Introduction

- Supreme Court of India recently ordered to seal and close 27 resorts operating in the corridors used by elephants in the Nilgiris.
- The step has been hailed by various environmental activists as a necessary step to restore the ecology of these spaces.
- Animal-human conflict is one important area which has been on the rise following human interference with the nature for the past few decades.

What is Eco-tourism in India?

- Eco-Tourism has been broadly defined as tourism which is ecologically sustainable.
- The concept of ecological sustainability involves the environmental carrying capacity of a given area.
- The general principals of ecotourism guiding the initiatives of the Tourism Ministry are as under:
 - The local community should be involved leading to the overall economic development of the area.
 - The likely conflicts between resource use for eco-tourism and the livelihood of local inhabitants should be identified and attempts made to minimize the same
 - The type and scale of eco-tourism development should be compatible with the environment and socio-cultural characteristics of the local community, and
 - It should be planned as a part of the overall area development strategy, guided by an integrated land-use plan avoiding inter-sectoral conflicts and ensuring sectoral integration, associated with commensurate expansion of public services.

Is the Outcome Desirable?

- Overexploitation in the area had led to severe man-animal conflict in recent years and illegal structures and farms encroaching forest areas.
- Forests that have turned in to farms and unbridled tourism are blocking the path of

- Without such serious interventions, suppression of particular caste on these lines will continue to happen.
- Succeeding in any mission to keep our cities clean will be an unending task.

elephants, resulting in growing incidents of elephant-human conflict.

- On an average these encounters claim the lives of about 450 people and lead to the death of nearly 100 elephants in retaliatory actions every year.

Elephant Corridors

- Elephant corridors are narrow strips of land that allow elephants to move from one habitat patch to another.
- A review of elephant corridors was published by the Wildlife Trust of India jointly with the Environment Ministry's Project Elephant last year.
- It indicated that there are 101 such identified pathways, of which almost 70% are used regularly.
- Nearly 3/4th of the corridors are evenly divided among southern, central and north-eastern forests, while the rest are found in northwest Bengal and north western region.
- Some of these passages are very narrow, at only a hundred metres wide.

Importance of Elephant Corridor

- There are an estimated 6,500 elephants in just the Brahmagiri-Nilgiris-Eastern Ghats ranges, which calls for the complete protection of the routes they regularly use.
- The movement of elephants is essential to ensure that their populations are genetically viable, and help regenerate forest on which other species, including tigers, depend.
- Fragmentation of forests makes it important in order to preserve migratory corridors.
- Ending human interference in the pathway of elephants is a necessary conservation element.
- It ensures that the animals are not forced to seek alternative routes that bring them into conflict with people.

Mushrooming Illegal Structures

- Around 39 resorts in the Nilgiris were pointed out by the District Collector to be running illegally even under the direct surveillance of the forest department.

- Another grey area is the increasing number of home-stay structures, which are just hotels on the forest fringes.
- These should be brought under surveillance and scrutinised for bringing the resorts and home-stays under proper guidelines.

What should be done?

- Efforts should be made to expand elephant corridors, using successful models within the country.

Strengthening the Federal Link

Introduction

- The State Finance Commission (SFC) is a unique institution created by the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments.
- To rationalise and systematise state level and sub-state level fiscal relations in India.
- The adequate significance of this institution has not been appreciated by the Union and the States as well as the professional community.

SFC

- Article 243 I of the Constitution mandated the State Governor to constitute a Finance Commission within one year of the amendment dated before 24th April, 1994 and thereafter every five years.
- Its primary task is to rectify growing horizontal imbalances in the delivery of essential public services to citizens.
- Primary concern is to suggest ways and means to strengthen the institutions of local governance viz. PRIs and ULBs
- They recommend principles and methodology as regards the devolution of funds to PRI's and ULB's.

In Violation to the Constitution

- Considering this, States should have submitted their 5th SFC report now.
- But till now, only Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala have submitted their fifth SFC reports.
- Many states are yet to cross the third SFC stage and a large majority has violated the mandate of the Constitution with escape from punishment.
- This raises the serious question of honouring the Constitution as a matter of convenience by the States.

Union Finance Commission (UFC)

- Under Article 280, President of India should, within two years of commencement of the Constitution and

- Such models should even include acquisition of lands using private funds and their transfer to the government.
- Major factors affecting conservation are the following –
- About 40% of elephant reserves are vulnerable, as they are not within protected parks and sanctuaries.
- The corridors have no specific legal protection.
- Illegal structures in these pathways should be removed without delay.

thereafter on expiry of every 5th year, or at such intervals as he/ she thinks necessary, would constitute a Finance Commission.

- It would consist of a Chairman and 4 other members who are all will be appointed by the President.
- Finance commission has to make recommendations to the President on two specific matters-
 - How the net proceeds of taxes should be distributed between the Union and States?
 - On what principles, the grants-in-aid of the revenues of the State out of the Consolidated Fund of India should be given to states?
- It also makes recommendations on any other matter referred to the commission by the president in the interest of Sound Finance.

Neglecting SFCs

- The UFC has been widely acknowledged as a professional and quasi-judicial body when compared to the SFC.
- The seriousness, regularity, acceptance of recommendations and their implementation which characterise the UFC are clearly absent in SFC.
- An overwhelming presence of serving or retired bureaucrats rather than academics is another example showcasing the importance of SFC.
- States are responsible for this as composition of the SFC had to be dealt by them.

A Broad Comparison

- For historical reasons particularly from the third commission, UFC have chosen a restrictive role of staying away from plan and investment allocations.

- With Planning Commissions' absence, the 15th UFC has to spell out its decision-making area.
- Normally SFCs could not do this although some have chosen the UFC path of staying away.
- The notion of SFC holding an inferior Constitutional status compared to UFC is a serious error.
- The SFC is undoubtedly modelled on the lines of UFC created under article 280 and exemplified in articles 243 I and 243 Y.
- While the UFC is tasked with rectifying vertical and horizontal imbalances at the Union-State level, the SFC has to perform the same with reference to State and sub-State level institutions.

Left Unnoticed

- One of the tasks of SFC not adequately appreciated is the commission's extremely difficult task of correcting horizontal imbalances.
- SFCs have to consider nearly 2.5 lakh local governments to promote minimum essential services in rural and urban areas.
- The golden rule of cooperative federalism is thus implemented by the SFC which assures minimum public goods irrespective of the residence of citizens.
- UFC has narrower and simple task compared to SFC in correcting horizontal imbalances.

A Link Role

- Article 280(3) has been amended to add clauses (bb) and (c) in order to take measures to augment the resources of panchayats and municipalities.
- It does it on the recommendations "made by the finance commission of the State".
- These amendments confirm the organic link between local governments and SFCs to fiscal federalism.
- UFC reduces only the inter-state disparity through their distribution of resource between or among states.
- On the other hand, SFC focuses on reducing intra-state disparities through horizontal distribution, making the Indian Federation a sustainable and inclusive nation-state.

SFC's Data Problem

Retrograde move: On Punjab's proposed law on sacrilege

Why in News?

- The Punjab Cabinet recently gave the nod for an amendment to the Indian Penal Code

- Local governments with no proper budgetary system have no proper mechanism and history of data storage.
- This makes the problem of accessing reliable data, a crucial task for the SFC.
- On the other hand, the financial reporting system of the Union and States is well laid down.
- UFCs had no data problem in reviewing the finances of the Union and the States.

States are Responsible

- The Constitutional amendments left the task of adequately empowering local governments to discharge constitutional obligations to the States.
- Unlike the UFC, no SFC can easily ignore articles 243G and 243 W which covers areas of planning for economic development and social justice.
- It has to abide by the Article 243 ZD which mandates that every state to constitute a district planning committee for spatial planning and environmental conservation at the sub-state level.

What UFC had Forgotten to Do?

- UFC have miserably failed in decentralising governance properly in the cooperative federal map of India.
- The hard truth is that no UFC has done its homework in reading and analysing SFC reports.
- No UFC can legitimately guide or contribute towards improving the goals of Constitutional amendments without going through the realities and shortcomings of the reports.
- Except the 13th UFC, they haven't made any concrete approach to improve local resource augmentation and to work towards a good local governance system.
- Their well-designed grant scheme to incentivise States will be fair only if they intend to give importance to SFCs.

Conclusion

- A great opportunity to build regional equity in India has been undermined.
- It has to be corrected only by means of providing necessary environment to the SFC to play their rightful role in the Indian Fiscal Federalism.

(IPC) to make sacrilege of all religious texts punishable with life imprisonment.

Background

- The current proposal is a slightly expanded form of amendments passed by the Punjab Assembly in 2016, specifically aimed at curbing acts of sacrilege targeting the Guru Granth Sahib.
- Two earlier bills, amending the CrPC and IPC, passed by the Punjab Assembly in 2016 had mandated life imprisonment for any sacrilege of the holy Guru Granth Sahib.
- The bills were introduced after several incidents related to the desecration of the holy book in various parts of the state were reported in 2015. The earlier bill passed by the state Assembly in March 2016 had been objected to by the Centre on the grounds that it should include punishment for sacrilege against all religions and not exclusively for the Sikh religion.

About the Legislation

- The proposal now cleared by the Cabinet aims to also cover the Bible, the Koran and the Bhagavad Gita. In specifics, the law will introduce a new section (Section 295-AA) in the Indian Penal Code.
- As prior permission of the Central or State government is needed to prosecute someone under such sections, a consequential amendment to the Code of Criminal Procedure will be required.

Can the States amend the Indian Penal Code?

- Both Parliament and States can amend the IPC, since Criminal Law including, Procedural Laws are in the Concurrent List.

The rationale behind the Legislation

- The Punjab government has cited the move as a major step, towards curbing sacrilege

incidents and maintaining communal harmony in the State,

Existing Provision

- Section 295-A of the IPC criminalises “deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings”. This can be invoked to jail someone for three years.
- The Supreme Court had upheld its constitutional validity in 1957, clarifying that the section, is aimed at preserving public order and miscreants are not allowed to fan disorder and tension by malicious acts such as damaging or desecrating a holy text.
- Section 153-A of the IPC that give scope to prosecute people in the name of protecting the feelings of a section of society.

Major Concerns

- **Wide Definition-**The State has to be careful about the definition. Desecration is an offence but the parameter of this offence needs to be cautiously drafted. If someone writes an article or a book, makes a speech with a bit of intellectual criticism, that certainly should not be covered.
- **Against Freedom of Speech-**Free speech is the engine of democracies. Article 19-1(a) of the Constitution guarantees a fundamental right that "all citizens shall have the right to freedom of speech and expression." these sections of the IPC are a big impediment to reasoned debate in India. Free speech, when exercised by individuals, challenges the orthodoxies of minds and empowers the progress of societies.

Tilting at windmills: US-China Trade War

Why in News?

- The move by the US to slap tariffs on its main trading partners — Canada, China, the European Union, and Mexico has Populist appeal according to a popular research Center poll in July, 73% of Republican voters support the tariffs.

Background

- In April 2017, President Donald Trump, who had repeatedly vowed to bring manufacturing and jobs back to the United States, directed the Commerce Department to investigate whether imports of foreign steel and aluminum from China and other countries could be a threat to national security

- The US administration since then has taken various protectionist measures in an attempt to bring down its trade deficit from around \$800 billion annually.
- For this, it is holding its trading partners accountable by vigorously enforcing US rights under various trade agreements and WTO Earlier in March 2018, the Trump administration had announced tariffs of 25% and 10% on all steel and aluminum imports citing national security issue.

Rationale behind USA's move

- A major concern among some U.S. policymakers is the size of the U.S. merchandise trade deficit with China, which rose from \$10 billion in 1990 to

\$375 billion in 2017. For the past several years, the U.S. merchandise trade deficit with China has been significantly larger than with any other U.S. trading partner.

- Some analysts contend that the large U.S. merchandise trade deficits with China indicate that the trade relationship is somehow unbalanced, unfair, and damaging to the U.S. economy.
- The impact on U.S. employment (especially in various manufacturing sectors) resulting from imports from China (particularly after it joined the WTO in 2001) has been a major point of contention. Some critics of U.S. trade policy toward China attempt to link U.S. job losses to the growth and size of U.S. imports from China and/or the bilateral trade imbalance.

Drawbacks of the Policy

- This approach simply ignores the complexity of global supply chains. It also glosses over underlying problems with the U.S. industrial structure. These changes, rather than globalisation, are responsible for the stagnation of average U.S. wages in real terms for almost 40 years. Some of the drawbacks are listed below

Connected Supply Chain

- Non-Chinese owned companies account for almost 60% of Chinese exports to the U.S. Much of this consists of very specialised parts required by U.S. factories to make a variety of products ranging from outboard motors for boats to computer routers. Since these non-Chinese companies cannot easily relocate their operations to other countries, the net result is that the burden of the tariffs will be felt by consumers in the U.S.
- U.S. imports from China also include products which contain parts made in other countries. 87% of computers and electronics, which constitute the largest share of Chinese exports to the U.S., includes parts and financing from other countries like South Korea, Japan, and the

U.S. itself. So not only does this limit the negative impact on Chinese manufacturing practices, it also affects other countries. The retaliatory tariffs China has imposed on U.S. products have also had a negative impact on German car producers in the U.S.

- U.S. merchandise exports from China account for only 3% of Chinese manufacturing revenue. And the impact of tariffs on a potential reduction of these exports is further diminished by a 7% fall in the value of the Chinese currency. Beijing also has more than \$1 trillion in foreign currency reserves to cushion the brunt of a trade war with Washington.

Internal Issues

- High Cost of Labour-No tariff can overturn the cost advantage Mexico has over the U.S. in labour costs. The national minimum wage there is a little over \$4 a day while the average worker in the U.S. automobile sector earns \$18 an hour.
- Income Inequalities- The focus on trade crucially ignores changes in the U.S. corporate structure and industrial relations over the last 30 years which have led to the phenomenon of extreme inequalities in income and wealth in the country. Recently, Apple became the first company to have a \$1 trillion valuation and today just 30 companies reap half of all profits produced by all publicly traded companies.
- Labour Issues-The greater concentration of capital allows the giant oligopolies to raise prices which takes more of a worker's pay cheque. Fewer companies means workers have less choice of employers and so have less bargaining power.
- Legislation and the courts have made it easier to fire union organisers, to use scabs to break strikes and for employers to campaign against unionisation of workers. As a result, less than 7% of private sector employees today are unionised, compared to a third in the 1950s.

Accepting help: on UAE's aid to Kerala

Why in News?

- The Indian Government has stated that it would meet requirements in Kerala through "domestic efforts".

What is the issue?

- The Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson said that "in line with the

existing policy", the Central government would meet requirements in Kerala through "domestic efforts". Various governments have made specific offers to Kerala, from about ₹700 crore from the UAE to about ₹35 lakh from the Maldives. The spokesperson added that only PIOs,

NRIs or international foundations could send money from overseas to the Prime Minister's or Chief Minister's relief fund.

- However, it has been pointed out that, this clarification about the existing policy is missing in the Central government's National Disaster Management Plan.

What does the NDMP say with respect to Foreign Aid?

- The Plan states that India will not appeal for foreign aid in the wake of a disaster.
- But it goes on to say: "... if the national government of another country voluntarily offers assistance as a goodwill gesture", the Central Government may accept the offer.
- The condition applies that the Union Home Ministry would consult the MEA and assess the requirements

Highlights of the National Disaster Management Plan 2016

- The NDMP has been aligned broadly with the goals and priorities set out in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.
- The Vision of the Plan is to "Make India disaster resilient, achieve substantial disaster risk reduction, and significantly decrease the losses of life, livelihoods, and assets – economic, physical, social, cultural and environmental – by maximizing the ability to cope with disasters at all levels of administration as well as among communities.
- For each hazard, the approach used in this national plan incorporates the four priorities enunciated in the Sendai

Get over the superpower syndrome

Why in News?

- The current debate on whether foreign assistance should be accepted for relief and reconstruction work following the devastating floods in Kerala is a distraction for the Central and State governments at a time of a grave crisis.

What is the issue?

- The Indian government had decided not to seek external assistance for disaster relief — from foreign countries or even the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Rationale

- It was felt that India should demonstrate that it had the strength to withstand and counter calamities and also help its neighbours, as it did in the case of the

Framework into the planning framework for Disaster Risk Reduction under the five Thematic Areas for Actions:

- Understanding Risk
- Inter-Agency Coordination
- Investing in DRR – Structural Measures
- d) Investing in DRR – Non-Structural Measures
- Capacity Development
- The Plan has also incorporated a Chapter on Strengthening Disaster Risk Governance and specifies agencies at the Centre and State with their respective roles.
- The National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP) provides a framework and direction to the government agencies for all phases of the disaster management cycle.
- The NDMP is a dynamic document in the sense that it will be periodically improved keeping up with the emerging global best practices and knowledge bases in disaster management.
- Globally, the approach towards post-disaster restoration and rehabilitation has shifted to one of betterment reconstruction. The NDMP provides a generalized framework for recovery since it is not possible to anticipate all the possible elements of betterment reconstruction.
- The Plan also highlights that the disaster risk reduction will be achieved by mainstreaming the requirements into the developmental plans.

December 2004 tsunami and piracy attacks in the Indian Ocean. India had felt that this would strengthen its case for seeking to be a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council and also hasten the prospect of superpower status by 2020.

- Since permanent membership of the Security Council entails additional financial commitment on its part, India's low level of mandatory contribution to the UN, calculated based on its capacity to pay, was also a matter of concern at that time. India thought it would be beneficial for it if it were to show that it was spending money abroad over and above the mandatory contribution.
- The other concern was the old fear of the foreign hand, the spies who would come

with the package, interfere in the country's internal affairs, and also take away valuable information.

India and UN

- India has been the biggest contributor to the UN Development Programme and the biggest recipient of assistance. It is a party to the regulations of the UN and its conditionalities for assistance.

About UNDP

- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is the United Nations' global development network. The status of UNDP is that of an executive board within the United Nations General Assembly.
- Headquartered in New York City, UNDP advocates for change and connects countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life.
- It provides expert advice, training and grants support to developing countries, with increasing emphasis on assistance to the least developed countries. It promotes technical and investment cooperation among nations.

Pulling Back from the Brink

Introduction

- Climate change and its associated problems is the most discussed domain in the international forum for the past few decades.
- "Hothouse earth" pathway, a condition which if earth reaches has no chance of getting back to the current stable state is the new topic added to the consequences of climate change.

Gazing Through the Past

- Holocene epoch which began 12,000 years ago is a stable period during which Homo sapiens settled.
- During this period, they developed agriculture and other technological innovations which brought them to the present earth.
- These social and economic transformations are supported by burning of fossil fuels and deforestation.
- It directly led to the increase in greenhouse gas emissions causing Global warming.
- Current period where humans dominate and shape the earth systems to their advantage is called Anthropocene epoch.

Maintaining the Equilibrium

- The UNDP Human Development Report Office also publishes an annual Human Development Report (since 1990) to measure and analyse developmental progress.
- UNDP is funded entirely by voluntary contributions from member nations. The organization operates in 177 countries, where it works with local governments to meet development challenges and develop local capacity.
- Additionally, the UNDP works internationally to help countries achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UNDP was one of the main UN agencies involved in the development of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Way Forward

- India's needs for technology and best practices can be obtained from the UN by careful planning and consultations. India should also hold discussions with the UN and the Red Cross with a view to formulating plans for reconstruction using the latest technology and international best practices

- Earth system has to undergo certain processes to maintain its delicate state of equilibrium whenever it gets altered.
- Such function may fall under either a positive feedback or a negative feedback.
- When occurrence of a process or a mechanism triggers the repetition of the same and puts it on a loop, it is considered as a positive feedback.
- Melting of ice in polar caps increasing open waters which in turn absorbs more sunlight and then increases warming furthering melting of ice.
- On the other hand, the occurrence of a process which in long term might cause the extinction of the same falls under negative feedback.
- With the increase in CO₂ increases chemical weathering and this removes the CO₂ from the atmosphere over geological time.

Imbalance and the Hothouse pathway

- When the positive feedback is greater than the negative feedback, the system may change abruptly and get pushed out of equilibrium.

- The earth and its systems have shifted between alternative states through long-term process over its geological history.
- The path of the earth system over the next hundreds of thousands of years will be determined by the technological trends and decisions taken in the next decade or two.

Tipping Point

- A Geophysical tipping point is a threshold limit beyond which a system moves from one stable state to another.
- Warming of earth over 2°C than the pre-industrial times, similar to a threshold level, leads to the tumbling of the following tipping points-
 - Destruction of Amazon forests due to wild fires.
 - Loss of permafrost with warming.
 - Melting of polar ice caps.
 - Weakening of CO₂ absorption by oceans and more.
- These chains of events disrupting ecosystem may push the system to periphery from where it cannot return back to the stable state, eventually results in the condition of a “hothouse earth”.

The Collision Course

- By implementing the Paris Climate deal of maintaining average global temperature below 2°C or even under 1.5°C may not change the course towards the hothouse pathway.
- The disruption may place the earth in a condition once the earth was, way back in the mid-miocene (15-17 million years ago) where the sea levels were 10-60 m higher than today and CO₂ levels at 300-500 ppm.
- Atmospheric concentrations of CO₂ are over 400 ppm which is responsible for the addition of 1°C to the pre-industrial level temperature of global average.
- Earths’ current levels are similar to the mid-pliocene epoch, 3-4 million years before where the sea-level is 10-22 m high.

Trouble in the hills: On Western Ghats Ecology

Introduction

- The Western Ghats are mountain ranges that run almost parallel to the western coast of the peninsular India.
- Its importance towards ecological balance makes it one of the Biodiversity hotspots of the world.
- The recent catastrophic events in the Western Ghats, especially in the states of

- Even to stay at the current level, a great deal of concerted efforts is needed in a remarkably short period of time.

Towards Stability

- Recognising the seriousness of the issue and carrying out deliberate, sustained actions to secure the earth systems and also adapting to a warmer earth are necessary.
- With emissions increasing year on year basis, deep cuts in GHG emission, increasing carbon sinks and finding a way to remove CO₂ are some important measures.
- Deflection of solar radiation to modify the energy balance will also be needed.

Change from Within

- Apart from technological solutions, fundamental shifts in social values and economic customs and conventions of the society are essential.
- Changes required and ways to attain the change in an ethical manner are still being debated.
- At this juncture, moral shift is essential and greater good of the society should be placed before individual gains.
- Incremental changes along with increasing contributions from renewable and improvement in energy efficiencies would not be sufficient.
- Major changes in technological innovation, behaviour, values and governance are needed both from the policy makers and the common public of the world.

Conclusion

- Given the history and the state of the biosphere, avoiding hothouse path is not likely to happen.
- But scientist community still see hope and it could be avoided by undergoing the above discussed infrastructural, societal and institutional transformations.
- This is an unprecedented challenge for the humanity.

Kerala and Karnataka have raised the debate on the policy matters in these areas.

Snubbing the Science

- In 2011, the Gadgil Committee issued recommendations for the preservation of the fragile ecosystem of the Western Ghats.
- Kasturirangan Committee was later set up to examine the recommendations of the Gadgil Committee.

- Both the committee with different views on the Ecologically Sensitive Area definition came with a bunch of recommendations to limit economic activities on the sensitive area.
- The State Governments of Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Goa and Maharashtra failed to take any cognisance of the reports citing it as a hindrance to their development agenda.

WGEEP

- Formally known as Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel, was headed by Madhav Gadgil to find a strategy to conserve and also develop the Western Ghats.
- It is also called Gadgil Committee and its recommendations are as follows:
 - It designated the entire hill range as an Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA).
 - It has classified the 142 taluks in the Western Ghats boundary into Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZ) 1, 2 and 3.
 - ESZ-1 being of high priority, almost all developmental activities was restricted in it.
 - No new dams based on large-scale storage be permitted in Ecologically Sensitive Zone 1.
 - The present system of governance of the environment should be changed.
 - It asked for a bottom to top approach (right from Gram sabhas) rather than a top to bottom approach.
 - It also asked for decentralization and more powers to local authorities.

Kasturirangan Committee

- A High-Level Working Group (HLWG) headed by Kasturirangan was set up to examine the WGEEP report.
- It recommended the following:
 - Only 37% (i.e. 60,000 sq. km.) of the total area be brought under ESA.
 - A complete ban on mining, quarrying and sand mining in ESA.
 - Distinguished between *cultural* (58% occupied in the Western Ghats by it like human settlements, agricultural fields and plantations) and *natural* landscape (90% of it should come under ESA according to the committee).
 - Current mining areas in the ESA should be phased out within the next five years, or at the time of expiry of mining lease, whichever is earlier.

- No thermal power be allowed and hydropower projects are allowed only after detailed study.
- Red industries i.e. which are highly polluting be strictly banned in these areas.
- Made several pro-farmer recommendations, including the exclusion of inhabited regions and plantations from the purview of ecologically sensitive areas (ESAs).
- 123 villages fall under the ESA purview.

Corrective Measures

- The states of the Western Ghats have to make certain correctives to their environmental policy decisions.
- Considering the balance between human developments with protection of ecology of the area, it is going to be a necessary but arduous task.
- Extractive industries like quarrying and mining allowed to operate will form core area of the debate.

Western Ghats Ecology Authority

- The Gadgil committee recommended constitution of a Western Ghats Ecology Authority (WGEA).
- It should be constituted as a statutory authority under the Ministry of Environment and Forests, with the powers under Section 3 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- Creation of WGEA and to adopt the zoning system can be considered by the policy makers of the state.
- This can keep incompatible activities out of the Ecologically Sensitive Zones (ESZs).

Non-sync of Data

- According to WGEEP the Western Ghats is spread over 1,29,037 sq km where as it is 1,64,280 sq km as per the Kasturirangan panel.
- The main issue is the calculation of the sensitive core and what activities can be carried out there.
- One expert assessment says 39 lakh households are in the ESZs where as another cites less than 4 lakhs as per the area identified by Kasturirangan panel.
- Irrespective of the data, the entire system of Western Ghats is globally a biodiversity hotspot.
- The goal has to be sustainable development for the Ghats as a whole.

Way Forward

- Power demand which led to big hydroelectric dams are not needed in this

era where low-impact forms of green energy solutions are available.

- New proposals for dams should be dropped without consideration.
- A complete ban on quarrying and mining in the identified zones, in Kerala and also in other states is necessary.
- The environmental impact made by these activities also should be measured.

Conclusion

The Roadmap to Military Reforms

Introduction

- Reforms are necessary in any sector to cope up with the emerging trends in technologies and changing needs of the people.
- Indian Military also needs the same to meet the country's security needs and challenges, with its growing aspiration to be a super power.
- Only a clear, definite and solid policy - driven directives will help to match her aspirations and to achieve her objective.

The history with Reforms

- Recent historical incidents can help in understanding how confusing things are in reforming the Indian Military.
- From the likes of decade old Group of Ministers' report, the Kargil Review Committee report and the Naresh Chandra Committee report, restructuring of higher defence organisation is always focussed as the first step towards reform.
- Integration at the top would bring in synergy among different tools of statecraft like bureaucracy, military, research and development, intelligence, internal security mechanisms and more.
- But before reaching full integration, the debate on reforms shifted to the second tier of reform in the operational domain.
- The second tier of reforms led to the three services pitting against each other in the operational domain of areas like space, cyber space and Special Forces.

Towards Integration

- The turf war between the three services did not result in the proposed wars in the operational domain, thus favouring Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff and Andaman and Nicobar Command which were seen as stepping stones towards integration.
- Headquarters IDS was created on 23rd November, 2001, to fulfil the need for an

- Kerala Ministers acknowledgement of need to review decisions affecting the environment is a positive change of attitude among the policy makers and the executive.
- Public consultation on the expert reports that includes people's representatives will find greater importance now.
- Such healthy policies will help chart a sustainable path ahead.

Institutional framework for the higher management of defence.

- The Andaman and Nicobar Command is the first integrated theatre command in India with headquarters at Port Blair operating directly under the Chief of Staff Committee (COSC).
- The COSC consists of-
 - Chief of the Army Staff.
 - Chief of the Naval Staff.
 - Chief of the Air Staff.
 - Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (non-voting member).
- Before the complete success of these services, another body proposed for Integration is the 'Integrated Theatre Command' (ITC).
- Under the ITC mechanism, a single commander will have at his disposal the resources and personnel of all the three services, namely, the army, air force and navy.
- As early as 2001, the Kargil Review Committee had recommended the implementation of greater integration and the appointment of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) as a single point of contact for the government instead of the existing three different heads for individual services.

Role of IAF

- Capturing ground beyond a few kilometres or taking physical control of vast maritime areas for prolonged period of time during war like situations are no longer sustainable operations.
- This leads to depletion of combat potential mainly in terms of high tempo operations.
- Air force plays vital role in such operations reaching the location before the other forces and giving a complete overview of the ground situation.
- In terms of participation in any joint operations with other tools of the military

or statecraft, IAF stands to be the first responders.

- There has never been any recorded criticism or shortfalls in the contribution of the IAF reported by other services to the apex forums like the Combined Commanders' Conference.
- Comparing the task of IAF in terms of exclusive and joint tasks, conservative figures reveal more than 60% is being committed to the joint tasks.
- The IAF is cognisant of its pivotal role in determining the trajectory of any limited high-intensity conflict in any kind of terrain.

Is IAF against Integration?

- Recently the Indian Air Force (IAF) raised several reservations regarding the integration drive proposed by the government, while the other two forces were comfortable with these mechanisms.
- Without considering any restructuring of higher defence organisation, creation of Chief of Defence Staff had been the topic for debate for some time.
- Theatre commands diluting the operational control of the respective service chiefs is the next problem to rise.
- But all the above reservations were left out and the debate now centres on IAF as playing the spoilsport over the integration mechanisms.
- It is important to look upon the core arguments put forward by the IAF in opposition to any piecemeal integration initiative.

Apprehensions over Reserves

- Reservations raised by IAF should not be considered as a roadblock but issues to be solved with serious concern.
- The creation of large Naval and Army aviation arms demonstrates the IAF's understanding that there is a need to complement its reducing resources with air arms.
- The main apprehensions of the IAF leadership are-
 - How to best exploit the dwindling offensive resources when engaged in a joint task like theatre commands.
 - Limited availability of enabling equipment and platforms which could seriously make operations worse even in a single-adversary limited conflict.
- International units like U.S.'s Pacific Command (PACOM) and Central Command

(CENTCOM) have their own assets that are first supplemented by reserve units from the U.S. in emergency situation.

- They are not pooled in from other theatre commands which raise the question of reserves for our theatre commands.

Need for a Wider Range

- Question on the Indian Army and Navy's ability to support the theatre command concept without much diversion of their assets always comes in to the picture.
- But reservations over the operational domain raised by IAF should be acknowledged and independent analysis of India's combat capability and its distribution when such concept is viable should be done.
- India's armed forces have little experience in training, staffing and exercising Joint Task Force based on at least a division-sized land component.
- Creation of three division-sized task forces for operation in varied terrain, including out-of-area contingency operations should be seriously considered.
- These if instituted would be commanded by an Army, Navy and Air Force three-star officer, reporting to the Chairman of the COSC, which could offer some real lessons in integration.

Possible Solutions

- National security reforms and restructuring are bound to have far reaching consequences pertaining to political stability in both domestic as well as international level.
- Historical evidence of successful military reforms in countries like Prussia, the U.S., the U.K., France and now China had followed one or the other ways -
 - Reforms at multi-pronged and simultaneous approach at all levels.
 - Sequential one beginning at the top.
- India can try an out-of-the box idea of bottom-up approach.
- But any approaches which leaves the top and the bottom unattended is seriously risky.

Conclusion

- Ideally speaking, a concurrent three-pronged approach to military reform would be ideal.
- Such an approach should respect the collective wisdom of past reforms and consider contemporary political and security considerations.

Kurukshetra

Rural Revolution

Source articles:

- Creating efficient transport infrastructure for inclusive growth
- Bharatmala Pariyojana: A stepping stone towards 'New India'
- Rural infrastructure: An Overview
- PMAY-G: Rural Housing Revolution
- PMAY-Grameen: Impact on Employment
- Rural Health: Emerging Challenges
- Ayushman Bharat – National Health protection Mission (NHPM) Salient Features
- Transforming drinking water infrastructure
- Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation- Swachh Survekshan – Grameen 2018
- Connecting the unconnected
- National Generic Document Registration System Adopted in Punjab and Andaman & Nicobar Islands

- India's economy is an Agrarian economy. For it to be strong, the rural economy needs to grow. There is a necessity in terms of creating vital supply and demand links with the other Indian industries as it is predominantly a source of raw material.
- This need has created more focus on a broad range of development goals rather than merely creating incentive for agricultural or resource-based businesses.
- Education, entrepreneurship, physical infrastructure like housing, connectivity to main roads, electrification, health, hospitals and sanitation and employment opportunities all play an important role in developing rural regions.

Rural Housing

- The lack of affordable housing is one of the critical issues faced by rural communities, due to which the Rural enterprise is stifled. An integrated approach is therefore key to sustain rural communities which is outlined in Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G).

Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G)

- Indira Awaas Yojana now known as Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) created by the Indian Government is a social welfare flagship programme for rural India's housing with facilities such as toilet, LPG Connection, drinking water and electricity connection.
- The hallmark feature of this scheme is its convergence with other schemes namely Swachh Bharat Abhiyan toilets, Ujjwala

Yojana, LPG gas connection and Saubhagya Yojana.

- Assists the beneficiary directly through IT-DBT Platform from the nodal account maintained by the state.

Aims at

- Providing financial assistance to weakest sections of society.
- Replace all temporary (kutcha) houses from Indian villages with pucca houses by 2022.

Features

- Houses are allotted with the name of the woman or jointly between husband and wife.
- Construction is the sole responsibility of the beneficiary & engagements of contractors is prohibited.
- Subsidies and cash assistance to people who are willing to construct themselves in villages.

So far

- Highest number of PMAY-G houses have been completed in the state of Uttar Pradesh 2017-18, followed by Madhya Pradesh & West Bengal.
- 38.22 lakh houses have been complete.

What facilitated the implementation?

- Transparent beneficiary selection
- Timely availability of funds
- Structured monitoring with feedback
- Healthy competition across states, districts, blocks and gram Panchayats.
- Rural mason training helped facilitate quality construction
- Making sure the continuous availability of construction material at reasonable costs.

Implementation

- Software named "AWAAS Soft" and IT-DBT Platform was launched to assist in improved administration.

Shyama Prasad Mukherji Rurban Mission:

Contributed in building urban-rural clusters in villages, where these clusters illustrate potential for growth, has economic drivers and derive locational and competitive advantages. The mission aims at 300 urban clusters and a critical gap funding (CGF) Spreading development and attracting investment.

IT-DBT

Its objective is to reform Government delivery system by re-engineering the existing process in welfare schemes for simpler and faster flow of funds or information and ensure accurate targeting of the beneficiaries, reduce duplication and fraud. DBT functions under the Cabinet Secretariat and its implementation is directly monitored by Prime Minister's Office (PMO). JAM Trinity i.e. Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and Mobile are DBT enablers

Rural Connectivity

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)

- It is a centrally sponsored scheme launched on 25th December, 2000 mainly focuses on this as a special intervention of creating sync over social divide between urban and rural areas.
- The work is executed by the state government and monitored by the Ministry of Rural development through national rural road development agency (NRRDA).

Objectives

- Connectivity by way of all-weather roads to unconnected habitations, rural, hilly, deserted and tribal areas.
- Rural roads to provide full farm to market connectivity.
- Additional financing to fill the gender gap by creating employment opportunities for women SHGs for routine maintenance of roads in Uttarakhand, Meghalaya and Himachal Pradesh.

Performance so far

- The road construction work under PMGSY during 2017-18 shows a speed of 134Km per day that accounts up to 6,342 number of habitations connected over a total length of construction of 24,673 km with Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and odisha in descending order.
- \$500 million loan agreement between government of India and World bank, May 2018 aims to build a 7,000 km of climate resilient roads and out of it 3500 km under green technologies, climate resilient construction, bio-engineering.

Impact of PMGSY

- The Scheme has helped increase the usage and access of fertilizers and improved seeds, cropping patterns, motorized agricultural vehicles with increased yield in dairy, poultry and allied activities production.

- increased employment opportunities, outside the village because of improved mobility.
- better access to health centers and quality of life.
- increase in attendance and enrollment of primary and middle schools.

Challenges

- Variation in unit costs from state to state.
- Generating funds for road maintenance
- Delayed execution due to climatic condition.
- Law and order issues.
- Unavailability of labour force and raw materials.
- Lack of technically skilled man power.
- Providing public transport services.

Way forward

- To help reduce the cost of material the nontraditional, durable and less expensive material like iron, steel slag, fly ash and lime that are locally and easily available can be used.
- Work to be scheduled after monsoons to avoid cost overruns
- Adopting Build-operate-transfer (BOT) annuity model.

Build-operate-transfer (BOT)

It is one of the models for Public Private Partnership (PPP) in infrastructure. where the private partner is responsible to design, build, operate (during the contracted period) and transfer back the facility to the public sector. Role of the private sector partner is to bring the finance for the project and take the responsibility to construct and maintain it. In return, the public sector will allow it to collect revenue from the users. The national highway projects contracted out by NHAI under PPP mode is a major example for the BOT model.

Transport infrastructure

- Transport infrastructure is one of the biggest enablers for socio-economic growth of a country providing link between sources of resource and sources of production, goods and services. It covers both roadways under Bharatmala and waterways under Sagarmala.

Recently inaugurated highways:

- 135 km long Kundli-Ghaziabad-Palwal (KGP) Expressway also known as Eastern Peripheral Expressway (EPE).
- 14 lane Delhi-Meerut expressway

Bharatmala Aims at

- Optimizing efficiency of freight and passenger by development and maintenance of economic corridors, inter-corridors, feeder routes, national, border and international connectivity roads, coastal and port, green field express ways, segmented in phases.
- Connectivity to the areas of economic activity, places of religious and tourist interest, border areas, tribal areas and all 550 districts.
- Reaching go downs and cold storages.
- Logistics parks and multi modal transport mix.
- Farmers and producers' access to market.
- Creation of jobs

Promotes use of Green fuel

- Ethanol, methanol, bio diesel, bio CNG, electricity produced from agri wastes like bamboo, non-edible seeds, municipal waste.

Safety on highways

- Driver training schools in every district to combat accidents **Under Motor vehicle amendment bill (passed in Lok Sabha in 2017)** with Stiffer penalties for drunk and rash driving, talking on phone, compensation for hit and run cases, seeking accountability for faulty design and poor maintenance, and provisions for Good Samaritans.

Sagarmala Aims at

- Creating 111 waterways as national highways.
- Industrializing port areas.
- Setting up of SEZ and 12 coastal economic zones around major ports.
- Coastal shifting and cruise tourism.
- Creating Jobs in the maritime sector. factories, fisheries.

Advantages

- Water transport cheaper and Less polluting than the road and rail
- Transport reduces logistics cost making them more competitive.
- Eg., Ganga Jal Marg Vikas project, Multi modal terminal at Varanasi, navigational lock at Farakka, Setu Bharatam project for safer roads. SEZ at JNPT and smart industrial port cities at Kandla and Paradip are under implementation, Ro-Ro (roll-on, roll-off) ferry service between Ghogha in Bhavnagar district and Dahej in Bharuch district in the Gulf of Cambay, Gujarat. It is South Asia's first world class Ro-Ro ferry service.

What are MAJOR PORTS?

Ports are under concurrent list. The distinction thus, simply has an administrative significance. The Major Ports are administered by the central government's shipping ministry, while those managed by other relevant states/departments are called minor ports. They handle nearly 75% of India's cargo traffic.

SEZ

SEZ are set up under Special Economic Zones Act, 2005 Department of Commerce, Ministry of Commerce & Industry as duty free enclaves to be treated as foreign territory for the purpose of trade operations and duties and tariffs. SEZ are allowed for manufacturing, trading and service activities.

Ro-Ro services

The Ro-Ro ferry services are vessels made to carry wheeled cargo (such as cars, trucks, semi-trailer trucks, trailers, and railroad cars) that are driven on and off ferry on their own wheels or using a platform vehicle. It is opposite of lift-on and lift-off (lo-lo) vessels which uses crane to load and unload cargo. The first of its kind was used in Gujarat.

Ministry of Road transport and highways: Green initiatives.

- Green highways: Planted over 2.5 lakh trees near highways to combat pollution
- Linking of construction of highways with digging of water bodies in drought affected areas that can help restoration of dried water bodies without any charge and contractors can help source the requisite soil without any payment.
- Making of Bridge cum barrage.
- **Swachhta pakhwada:** From 16th to 31st July 2017 was observed under Swachh Bharat mission for the provision of toilets and litter bins at NHAI toll plazas.
- Tractors and construction equipment vehicles to follow norms of low Sulphur fuel from 2020.
- Electric vehicles, e-rikshaws are exempted from permits.

PMAY-Grameen: Employment

- Apart from availing institutional finance they are entitled to finance to 90-95days of employment under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGA), Rs 12,000 for constructing toilets under Swachh Bharat

Mission, under the Ministry of rural development (MoRD).

- The expenditure on housing generates both direct and indirect employment.

Direct employment based on PAHAL

- Includes cost composition labour in constructing PMAY-G houses, the materials used.
- The wage for the labor is taken from the notification issued by respective state govt. PAHAL Ensures LPG subsidy in bank and prevent its misuse via DBT.

Direct employment based on PMAY-G

- It is calculated on the basis of the person-days based upon the completed house prices if all the beneficiaries have taken the support of MNREGAS .

Indirect employment

- Assess the increase in the demand for construction material due to the expenditure incurred on both completed and under construction houses.
- The increase in the input demand has implications on the additional job creation

Rural Electrification - Energy Security

Rural electrification forms the backbone of the rural economy's development.

- It speeds up the growth of the agricultural sector and agro based industries
- Improves the delivery of health and education
- Provides access to communication channels
- Improved lighting
- Woman empowerment as they can read and learn

DDUGJY

- With the electricity now reaching all villages through the Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY), it is being termed as a game changer moment for readying the country towards achieving universal electricity access.
- On 28th April ,2018 Leisang a village in Manipur became the last village to have received electricity.
- The Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana (RGGVY) 2005 was the very first scheme on rural electrification.
- Rural Electrification Corporation Limited (REC) shall be the Nodal Agency for operationalization and implementation of the scheme under the guidance of Ministry of Power.

A village qualifies as electrified if it fulfills

- Provision of distribution transformers and lines.
- Supply at public places like schools, panchayat office, health centers, dispensaries, community centers
- At least 10% of the total number of households in the village are electrified.

Schemes so far

Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY)2015

- It focuses on feeder separation (rural households & agricultural) and strengthening of sub-transmission & distribution infrastructure including metering at all levels in rural areas facilitating 24*7 supply of electricity.

Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (SAUBHAGYA) 2017

- Under the scheme, government will provide free electricity to all households identified under Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) data 2011.
- along with it covers households not covered under SECC data on payment of Rs 500 recovered by DISCOMS in 10 installments through electricity bill
- Gram Panchayat/Public institutions in rural areas will be authorised to collect application forms along with complete documentation, distribute bills and collect revenue in consultation with Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).

Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All (UJALA)

- The main objective is to promote efficient lighting through bulbs like Light-emitting Diode (LEDs) consumes only one-tenth of energy used by ordinary bulb to provide the same or better light output.

GARV-II

- The Ministry of Power has also launched a new app, **GARV-II** to provide real-time data and ensure transparency of all six lakh villages of the country.

Way forward

- Electricity to all and clean energy can help solve the low level of energy availability and consumption with the ambitious 175 GW through renewable sources of energy that includes 100 GW Of solar energy.
- Supplying power from the surplus states to deficit states.
- Efforts into 'one nation, one grid, one frequency'
- Replacing every single bulb with an LED Bulb, energy efficiency has seen 75%

reduction in LED Bulb prices and increase in distribution.

- The domestic and streetlight LED Programme will Help reduce the peak load demand by 22 GW and reductions in Carbon dioxide emissions by 8.5 crore tons.

Rural health

- Health care which is a right of every individual is poised to undergo changes in stages of prevention, diagnosis and treatment, when private and public sectors come together to bridge the gap.

Health care centres has been categorized into: Sub centre

- The peripheral and first contact point between the Primary health care system and the community.
- Manned by at least one auxiliary nurse midwife (ANM), Entrusted with the supervision of 6 sub centres.

Primary health centre (PHC)

- First contact point between village community and the medical manned by a medical officer
- Established and maintained by the state govt under the Minimum needs programme (MNP)/Basic minimum services (BMS) Programme.
- Acts as a referral unit for 6 sub centers and 4-6 beds for patients.

Community Health centers (CHC)

- Established and maintained by state govt under MNP/BMS programme.
- Manned by 4 medical specialists that is surgeon, physician, gynecologist and pediatrician with 30 indoor beds with one OT, X-ray, labour room and laboratory facilities.
- Referral centre for 4 PHCs.

First referral units (FRUs)

- facilities like district hospital, sub divisional hospital, community health care can be declared as FRUs if it is fully equipped with round-the-corner services and emergencies with blood storage or linkage facility.

Challenges

- Lack of quality infrastructure
- Dearth of qualified medical functionaries and personnel.
- Non-access to basic medicines and medical facilities.
- Deplorable facilities in rural India
- Gaps in implementation

- Around 75% of health care is concentrated in urban areas even though only 27% lives there.

Opportunities

- Parliamentary committee has recommended that all doctors passing from Indian medical colleges must serve in rural areas for at Least one year in order to address shortage of doctors.
- As per the report of national health profile 2018, India has made substantial progress in the decline on several indicators like infant mortality rate (IMR), Maternal maternity rate (MMR), and total fertility rate (TFR).

Way forward

- Inviting private sectors in rural remote diagnostics, telemedicine services, by filling the health gap due to lack in public funded infrastructure, however they are unwilling to do so as the returns are poor but a market future is there.
- It can help improve access to health care in rural parts. For beneficiaries of Govt. insurance scheme, Cashless health insurances. Smart card to be used at govt empaneled hospitals in rural areas.

Ayushman Bharat

- It is a Universal health protection scheme, to which 25 states have signed with union health ministry till June end to start the scheme.
- Under this there will be a provision for 50 crore beneficiaries, and a coverage up to 5 lakh rupees per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.
- will be paperless and cashless in both private and public empaneled hospitals across India for the beneficiaries.
- It will subsume the on-going centrally sponsored schemes Rastriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) and the senior citizen health insurance scheme (SCHIS).
- At the national level, Ayushman Bharat national health protection mission agency (AB-NHPMA) would be put in place and the States /UTs will implement under state health agency (SHA).
- The expenditure incurred in premium payment will be shared between central and state governments in specified.
- In states and UTs where the scheme is implemented in trust/society mode, the central share of funds provided based on actual expenditure or premium ceiling

(whichever is lower) in the pre-determined ratio.

- Considering the criteria in SECC DATA.

SECC data

- The Socio Economic and Caste Census 2011 (SECC) was conducted for the 2011 Census of India.
- The first paperless census in India conducted on hand-held electronic devices by the government in 640 districts in all states and union territories of India.
- SECC 2011 was the first-ever caste-based census since 1931 Census of India.

Transforming water infrastructure

- There is a direct relationship between drinking water, health, and overall well-being, which otherwise leads to high rates of infant mortality, severe wasting, and stunting among children, high rates of morbidity and low life expectancy.

Swachh Survekshan-Grameen (SSG) 2018

- Keeping this a matter of concern, SSG 2018 has been launched by the Ministry of drinking water and sanitation to conduct a survey and annual ranking of all districts and states on quality and quantity based on Swachhta/sanitation) parameters from August 1st to August 31st.

The parameters include

- Elimination of open defecation
- Eradication of Manual Scavenging
- Modern and Scientific Municipal Solid Waste Management
- To effect behavioral change regarding healthy sanitation practices
- Generate awareness about sanitation and its linkage with public health
- Capacity Augmentation for ULB's

Aims

- Covering 6,980 villages in 698 districts.
- 34,000 public places like schools, anganwadis, public health centres, haat/bazaars/religious places.
- Another such scheme, **Swajal Scheme** in 115 districts of Indian villages including the 35 left wing extremism districts (LWE) and Jammu and Kashmir.
- Aims to provide sustained piped water supply powered by solar energy.
- 90 % funded by the Government and 10% by the beneficiaries incorporating PPP.

National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP)

- Launched under Bharat Nirman with objective of ensuring provision of safe and

adequate drinking water supply through hand-pumps, piped water supply etc. to all rural areas, households and persons.

- This programme was launched after merging the three erstwhile programmes on Accelerated Rural Water Supply Programme-ARWSP; Swajaldhara and National Rural Water Quality Monitoring & Surveillance.

Involvement of PRIs

- As per the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution, the responsibility for drinking water may be devolved to the panchayati raj institutions (PRIs) with a 10% weightage in allocation of funds to States.

The Objectives of this programme is to provide

- 40 liters per capita per day (lpcd) of safe drinking water for human beings and 30 lpcd additional for cattle in the Desert Development Programme Areas.
- One hand-pump or stand post for every 250 persons.
- Water source should exist within the habitation / within 1.6 km in the plains and within 100 metres elevation in the hilly areas.

Institutional set up

- State water and sanitation mission (SWSM) and district water and sanitation mission (DWSM) in state and district level respectively as policy making bodies.
- Department of drinking water and sanitation as nodal agency for implementation
- approve annual budget and channels funds to Gram Panchayats (GP) and village water supply and sanitation subcommittee (VWSSC)
- District water and sanitation committee for appraising schemes.
- District level implementing agency to provide technical guidance and assistance and will report to DWSMs.
- Gram panchayat to mobilise the formation of village water supply and sanitation subcommittee (VWSSC) and ensure participatory approach for Scheme planning, designing, procurement through Jal Prabandhan committee.

Conclusion

- For a developing nation like India where 65 % of the people are from rural India aim should be at improving the livelihood in an equitable and sustainable manner both socially and environmentally through better access to assets and services.

- Misappropriating and misusing is lessened if transparency is adhered and monitored by stakeholders .National Generic Document Registration System (NGDRS) developed by the Department of Land Resources promotes transparency through digital means on updated and error-free land records and has been piloted in 3 States that is Punjab, Rajasthan, Maharashtra with Goa, A&N Islands, Bihar, Jharkhand, Manipur, Mizoram are moving towards this system and HP, AP, MP,

Kerala, Uttarakhand having shown interest to adopt this common software. Empowerment of PRIs is a viable and sustainable option.

- The real change will come up with the public-private filling up the gaps.
- The schemes/yojanas have played as the automatic stabilizer in the economy and the schemes in its full and proper implementation will help in attaining overall development of the country and its people.

Linking Farmers to e -NAM



Brief History of Agricultural marketing

- Agriculture is one of the most critical sectors of the Indian economy. Growth and development of agriculture and allied sector not only affects the rural prosperity and employment but also forms an important resource base for a number of agro-based industries and services.
- Prior to independence, the major concern of the Government policy related to agricultural marketing was to keep the prices of food for consumers and agro-raw materials for the industry in check.
- However, after independence, the need to protect the interest of farmers and to expand the production of agricultural commodities was also felt.
- During 1960s organized agricultural marketing with Well- laid out market yards and sub-yards were constructed for each market area that came into existence through the enactment of APMR Act.
- These regulations helped getting rid of malpractices and imperfections. Today, there are 7000 regulated markets in India.

APMR Act Constraints

- Market of agricultural produce became highly fragmented.

- Multiple license requirements for trading in a State and levy of market fee with commission charges at multiple points along with high incidence of fee and charges.
- The benefits to farmers depended on the facilities/amenities available to them. Eg., Electronic weigh-bridges are available only in a few markets.
- Post-harvest wastages

The Model act,2003 and its shortcoming

- A model act prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture in 2003 amended APMR act at state/UT with provisions like direct marketing, contract farming, single license, single point levy of market fee, e-trading. Still the agricultural marketing system remained uncoordinated due to poorly equipped network.
- The act was further liberalised to bring in 'one nation, one market' and barrier-free marketing.
- The new model act 'the state/UT Agricultural produce and livestock marketing (promotion and facilitation) act,2017 or APLM has been introduced.
- In order to facilitate competition, government unified the national market and announced networking of markets through **electronic National Agricultural market (e-NAM)** in 2016 which is pan India trading service.

Aims to/benefits

- Real time price discovery which ensures transparency and competitiveness in transmission of inner market opportunities to farmers.
- A single window service for APMC related information.
- Facilities of e- auction to the Traders licensing system (pan Indian)

- Supporting infrastructure (for storage, sorting, grading)
- Larger value of arrival and Reduction in transaction cost.

Constraints in implementation of e-NAM:

- Trading on virtual platform needs well established grading system with front line demo.
- A wide correlation between producer, market channels, retailer and consumer needed including secondary activities, Research and development.
- Apex level needs to understand the implementation at ground level in making policy changes when required.
- Synergy of warehousing and collateral management financial institutions
- Training farmers on managing their finances, interpersonal communications, payments and transaction, markets in adoption of grades, produce handling and sale procedure, and dispute redressal.
- Pathways of integrating small stakeholders, buyers and sellers. It requires internet linked rural kiosk.
- Eg., of e-NAM ...regulated markets of odisha to electronic national market.to bring the transformation which requires the ability and the willingness to participate Collaboration between producer organisation FPO and Private sector needs to be built.

New feature

- Linking rural periodic markets (RPM)by upgrading them as GrAM (Gramin Agricultural Markets) And to establish primary rural agricultural markets (PRAM). It provides direct marketing and platform aggregation. There is a plan to

Boost to Farmers Income

Cabinet approves hike in MSP for Kharif crops for 2018-19 season

- 1.5 times of the production cost is calculated as the MSP For Kharif crops under the commission for agricultural costs and prices (CACP) recommendation.
- Increase in MSP of Nigerseed, Moong, Sunflower Seed, Cotton. paddy, jowar (hybrid), ragi, arhar
- Extent of buffer stock of pulses increased from 1.5 lakh tones to 20 lakh tones.
- Pulses procurement increasing

MSP

connect over 22,000 GrAMs, local markets with platform.

- BHIM App in 6 regional languages, English and Hindi, strengthened with MIS dashboard for price information.

Adopting model agriculture produce livestock market act (2017)

- It extends the market area to whole state/UT as one unified market area for any kind of agricultural produce.
- This removes the entry barriers and fragmentation of markets within the state.
- It allows to set up private markets, farmer consumer markets managed by market committee, private consumer market yards managed by a person and electronic trading platform.
- Warehouses and silos to be declared as market points, it requires warehouses accredited by WRDA. eg: Rastriya e-Market services private limited in Karnataka, Punjab where silos were notified as mandis.

Way forward

- Implementation of e- markets in phased manner.
- Linking of small farmers to markets by producer organizations.
- Establishing Agri logistics making it more competitive.
- Services handling aggregation, storage and certification.
- Providing market information prior to crop planning.

Conclusion

- Responsive, inclusive, technologically enabled markets are the need of the hour.
- Awareness is the biggest challenge.
- A national e-literacy campaign needs to be initiated to touch 130 million farmers with e-NAM portal benefitting a better market.

- Minimum Support Price (MSP) is a form of market intervention by the Government of India to protect the producer / farmers against excessive fall in price during bumper production years and glut in the market, government agencies purchase the entire quantity offered by the farmers at the announced minimum price.
- The minimum support prices are announced by the Government of India at the beginning of the sowing season for certain crops on the basis of the

recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP).

- MSP is price fixed by Government of India the minimum support prices are a

Youth as Agents of Change

Source articles

- Youth as agents of change
- 10 new Swachh iconic places launched under Swachh Bharat Mission Phase III of Swachh Iconic Places (SIP)
- How Sikkim is ensuring ODFS, ODF-Q

- India can boast of its 55% population lying under the category of 15-24 years of age. This demographic dividend of young people who are the social actors, can propel the economy to a greater growth by bringing about small changes.
- Private investment is expected to revive under GST. In achieving this in a system of democracy with varied interest and latest technology, has been made possible by the huge youth population.
- A critical role has been played by the youth in social revolution under Jan Dhan Yojana for financial inclusion, Aadhaar biometric identification and mobile telecommunications.

Financial inclusion

Financial inclusion is the delivery of financial services at affordable costs to sections of disadvantaged and low-income segments of society. It includes the goals defined by The United Nations in

- Bringing accessibility, sustainability
- Ensuring continuity and certainty of investment
- Competition to ensure choice and affordability

In partnership with the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, the UN aims to increase financial inclusion of the poor by developing appropriate financial products for them and increasing awareness on available financial services

Aadhaar

- It is a 12-digit unique-identity number issued to all Indian residents based on their biometric and demographic data. The data is collected by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI), a statutory authority established by the Government of India, under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, under the

guarantee price for their produce from the Government.

- The major objectives are to support the farmers from distress sales and to procure food grains for public distribution.

provisions of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and other Subsidies, benefits and services) Act, 2016.

Jan Dhan Yojana

- Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) or National Mission for Financial Inclusion was launched on 28 August 2014 to ensure affordable access to financial services viz. Bank accounts, remittance, credit, insurance and pension.
- Bharat net enabled 100,000 Gram Panchayats to access high speed broadband.
- Despite these developments, there are challenges that the country has to confront in terms of rapid urbanization, corruption, poverty, healthcare, education, pollution, women safety, infrastructure gap, unemployment etc.
- These are the areas where youth can play a very good role in creating a difference for the growth of the nation.
- Two main issue that can be taken care of are:
 - Clean environment and pollution control
 - Education

Clean environment and pollution control

- 9/10 people in the world breathe in polluted air. pollution threatens us all but the poorest and the marginalized people bear the brunt of the burden where cooking stoves, heating fuel and kerosene lighting are the common sources of pollution. urban politicians make it difficult for urbanites to convince farmers to use less polluting mediums and practices.
- PM2.5 is too small which if inhaled enters into the blood stream causing degeneration of blood brain barriers leading to oxidative stress, neuro inflammation.
- It is today's youth who has to live with the environment which is deteriorating and they only can help generate effective responses to ecological challenges by having environment friendly practices, preserving resources and recycling.
- It not only impacts their behavior but influences the nearby environment.

Education

- Literacy and educational level indicate the level of development of a society or nation.
- It acts as a checks and balances in aspects of developmental efforts, population control, health, hygiene, environmental degradation, employment of the weaker sections.
- It even checks gender inequality, reduces poverty, and hence maintains economic competitiveness.
- For example: the Pakistani school girl Malala Yousafzai defied threats from Taliban to campaign for the right to education and became a global example to youth.

Conclusion

- In addition, sanitation related days/weeks such as Swachhta Hi Seva, Global Hand washing Day, etc. are observed to build awareness among students and communities.
- The youth if properly channelized shall be instrumental in the development of the country.
- This assumes significance as the youth groups serve a change-agents by running civil societies.
- Youth which have the 'muscles of iron and 'nerves of steel' can bring a transformational change in India.

10 new Swachh iconic places launched under Swachh Bharat Mission Phase III of Swachh Iconic Places (SIP)

- SIP is a collaborative project with 3 central ministries: ministry of housing and urban affairs, M/o Culture and M/o Tourism, coordinated by Ministry of drinking water and sanitation, under phase III of its flagship programme, Swachh Bharat Mission.
 1. Raghavendra Swamy Temple (Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh),
 2. Hazardwari Palace (Murshidabad, West Bengal),
 3. Brahma Sarovar Temple (Kurukshetra, Haryana),
 4. Vidur Kuti (Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh),
 5. Mana village (Chamoli, Uttarakhand),
 6. Pangong Lake (Leh-Ladakh, Jammu & Kashmir),

7. Nagvasuki Temple (Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh),
8. Ima Keithal/market (Imphal, Manipur),
9. Sabarimala Temple (Kerala)
10. Kanvashram (Uttarakhand)

Open defecation Free (ODF)

- The term "open defecation free" (ODF) is used to describe communities that have shifted to using a toilet instead of open defecation. This can happen for example after community-led total sanitation programs have been implemented.
- Having been declared open defecation free (ODF) in March 2018, Mizoram has a host of practices in place to sustain its ODF status. From mandatory construction of toilets for new households to community sanitary complexes with sufficient running water, the district also has an efficient solid waste management mechanism.

The Inspiring Story of How Sikkim Became India's Cleanest State

- According to the report, undertaken by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), all four of Sikkim's districts rank among top ten districts in cleanliness and sanitation. About 98.2% households in Sikkim are equipped with clean toilets and 100% of the state's population use the community or household toilet
- It was 13 years ago in 2003 when the Pawan Chamling-led government launched its total sanitation campaign for the state. in the major cities like Gangtok and Namchi.
- Next, the Sikkim state government made it mandatory to have functional sanitary toilets at home for candidates filing nominations for contesting panchayat elections, mandatory for availing any kind of benefit and grants from the government.
- In schools, as many as 1,772, every adolescent girl child could get a sanitary napkin by inserting a Rs 2 coin into the vending machines. Smoking in public place, for example, could cost the offender a fine of Rs 200, whereas urinating in public places has a fine of Rs 500.
- Along with the ban on plastics, compel locals as well as tourist to use the RO or filter water made available in designated public places, hotels and restaurants.

RSTV Corner

POLICY WATCH: Social Media

What is fake news?

- **Fake news** is a type of yellow journalism or propaganda that consists of deliberate misinformation or hoaxes spread via traditional print and broadcast news media or online social media.
- Fake news is written and published with the intent to mislead in order to damage an agency, entity, or person, and/or gain financially or politically,

New age crimes

- Fake news has been the foundation for various criminal activities such as **lynching mob attacks, cow vigilant attacks, hatred against other community** etc
- Since large part of the Indian population has been using Social media (250 million approximately), it has been difficult for the government to tackle this issue.
- **Lack of media policy for verification** has been the key in this issue.

Steps taken by government

- The Union Government has set up a committee for **DATA PROTECTION POLICY** headed by Justice **BN Srikrishna**.
- Various URLs which had been spreading fake news has been blocked by the government, it has also asked the service

providers to pre-filter the objectionable content for e.g., Child pornography etc

- The government has asked the social media websites to provide the metadata information of the fake news content.

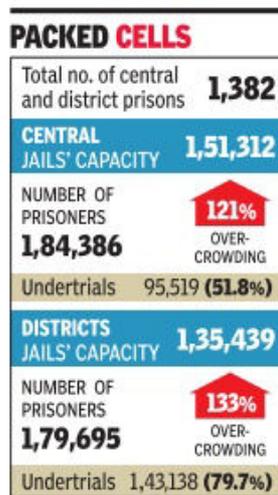
Way forward

- The intermediary guidelines under Section **79 of the 2011 IT Act** mandates companies to follow “due diligence” and allowed time up to **36 hours** for companies to remove objectionable content.
- This time limit must be further reduced, as 36 hours is longer time in this technological era.
- A new **SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY** must be framed by the government, which must have a balancing feature between both privacy and fake news prohibition.
- A Self-regulating body like sensor board for movies, must be created for online media provisions.
- Personal data will must to be stored on servers located within India, and transfers outside the country will need to be subject to safeguards. Critical personal data, however must only be processed in India.
- The Data Protection policy must be implemented completely without harming the **RIGHT TO PRIVACY** of the citizens.

POLICY WATCH: SC Panel on Prison Reforms

Why prisons need to be reformed?

- The prisons in India are said to be over occupied up to a level of about 150% of the original occupancy of the prisons.



- There are number of vacancies lying open in various part of the nation. It is

considered to be a major flaw in the prison system.

- The security of women in the prisons had been in a large question over the years in the country (4.3% of total offenders).
- The low sanitation and high level of corruption in the prison system is another major cause for the degraded prison models around the country.

Rajasthan model

- Over the years, Rajasthan has been the pioneer in prison reforms, the recent one “OPEN AIR CAMPS “is one such scheme, which must be implemented all over the country.
- In the open-air camps model, the offenders are said be allowed to work in places around the prisons and let to live with their family, they must return to the prisons at night.

- It is said to be a transition line between prison life and open society environment.
- In the municipality area, they are called as “FREE COLONY “, where they are allowed to work in other parts of the town.
- Stress management programs, yoga sessions, literature classes are said to be conducted among the offenders to enrich their life when they go outside.

OPEN PRISON VS CLOSED ONES

Closed Prison	Open Prison
Fort-like structure	No structure
Lock-ups and high-security cells	None
24-hour surveillance	None
3-times counting/roll call	Morning and evening roll call
Staff required to manage prison	None
Massive kitchen & store house	None
Inhuman living conditions	Living in a village-like set-up
Operational cost p.a. (Jaipur Central Jail) ₹18,72,60,000	Annual expense p.a. (Sanganer open prison) ₹24,00,000

Judicial problem

- Out the more than 4 lakhs offenders in Indian prisons, 63% are said to be under trail offenders, they form the major congestion in prisons.

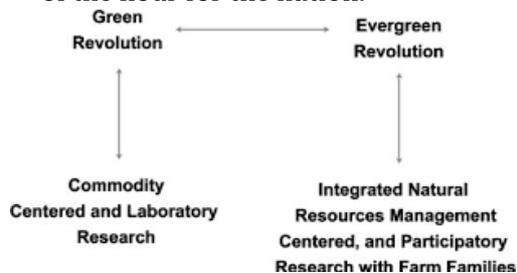
EUREKA: True Face of Indian Agriculture

Why green revolution is considered as failure?

- The Indian farmers did not accommodate the right package technology, which was recommended by the scientists.
- Improper use of technology has been regarded as one of the major reasons for the failure of green revolution.

What is evergreen revolution?

- To produce more from less land, less pesticide, less water and it must be an revolution to get sustainable agriculture.
- With land size used for agriculture and water level decreasing and nutrient level depleting, evergreen revolution is the need of the hour for the nation.



Challenges

- In spite of bumper production of **300 mt of food grains, 310 mt of fruits and vegetables and 160 mt of dairy**

- This is due to the absence of speedy trial in the judicial system in the country.
- Vacancies of judges around the country has been another main reason for the slow trial.

Way forward

- Each district in the country must have one “OPEN AIR CAMP” for overall development of the offenders.
- NATIONAL POLICY FOR PRISONS AND NATIONAL COMMISSION OF PRISONS are said to be the need of the hour.
- Since prisons are said to be in “STATE LIST”, it differs for different states, so an overall policy for the nation needed.
- More number of Women doctors, staff and infrastructure must be provided for women prisons.
- Wide Range of JUDICIAL AND POLICE REFORMS is the need of the hour for a convenient speedy trial.
- Prisons must be enriched in a way that when the offenders come outside the prisons, they should be well fit to the open society.
- This Supreme court Panel formed to study the prison reforms must be able to fill the gaps which are formed over the decades.

products, 40% of world’s hungry children and 25% of hungry people are in India.

- The income gap between farming and non-farming sector is said to be in a worrying range of 1:5.
- **Poverty, hunger and malnutrition** are the three main challenges faced by Indian people.



RECOMMENDATIONS OF NCF (National Commission of Farmers), 2004

- Enhance the farmer income to make it as equal as non-sector people.
- Government must consider of farmer’s income replacing the current trend of taking the measurement of their yield.

- The government must encourage farmers to have a diversified production, to make agriculture a sustainable business.
- **RISK FUND** for damages occurred during natural calamity due to national change.
- **NATIONAL MARKETING SYSTEM** which integrates various state agriculture markets.
- Village Knowledge Centre to enrich technical knowledge of farmers.
- Implementation of **SOIL HEALTH CARD** scheme.

Way forward

- Way to NEW INDIA will be only through the development of small and rural farmers in a sustained manner.

- Technical cooperation for developing countries is needed to take agriculture as an important business in international level.
- Chinese Indian cooperation is what brought out hybrid variety in Indian agriculture; further developments in this relation will bring more advantage to Indian farmers.
- In the end, under nutrition must not become a hereditary disease and government must take necessary steps to make farmers to income double by 2022,

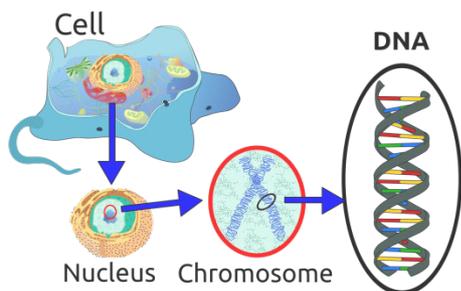
A QUESTION OF SCIENCE: Biotechnology in Wildlife Conservation

Earth- a land of diversity

- In the whole solar system earth is the only place which acts as a host to large diversity of plants, animals, humans etc.,
- Where humans take most of the share mainly due to rapid Industrialisation and population explosion.
- Mainly in India 132 plants and animals are under IUCN list of ENDANGERED CATEGORIES. For e.g. Tiger, leopard, Great Indian bustard, Indian rhinoceros etc
- The major losers of this process will be humans as the ecosystem will lose its foundation and eventually leads to major threat to whole mankind.

How is biotechnology used to conserve wildlife?

- Initially Dung samples are said to be collected and sent to research labs such as **Laboratory for the Conservation of Endangered Species (LaCONES)**.
- From there DNA of animals are said to be separated using appropriate chemicals in **Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology**.
- The DNA of different animals are said to be stored in both online and in-house database for future use of the technology.

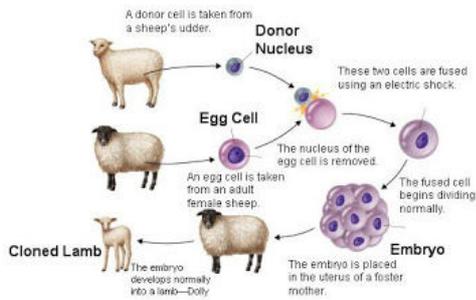


Advantages of DNA samples

- DNA gives a broad framework about both the history and future of the current generation of the animal population.
- The DNA database is used to forensic works of wildlife crimes all over country, since the data is also stored online.
- The animals can be easily tracked without any view of visual appearance.
- It helps in monitoring **SEX RATIO, LOCATION and MOVEMENT** of the particular species of animals.
- The DNA based population can be used to plan the better future for the wildlife.
- DNA fingerprinting is important in identifying traits vital to understand breeding peculiarities of wild animals specially birds.
- Genetic resource bank could facilitate the longer storage of diverse endangered and exotic genetic material.

Role of LaCONES (Laboratory for the Conservation of Endangered Species)

- This lab plays a major role in forensic related to wildlife crimes all over the country.
- They are planning for artificial breeding programs and assisted techniques for big cats in order to enhance their reproduction.
- The **ELISA TEST** is conducted in animal dung to check the pregnancy of animals, even before it shows physical symptoms.
- This can be used in Early detection, Better care and successful birth of the animals which could enhance the ecosystem.
- It is also trying for cloning to produce the extinct animals and bring them back to balance the ecosystem.



Way forward

- The government must take rigorous steps to spread awareness campaigns as it did for tigers.
- The breeding programs must be well supported in order to enrich the quality and quantity of the ecosystem.

INDIA'S WORLD: India – Maldives Ties

Historical background

- India established formal diplomatic relations with Maldives after the independence of Maldives from the British rule in 1966.
- Operation Cactus was India's military aid of 1600 soldiers to Maldives to fight the armed attack of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the year in 1988.
- India has provided liberal economic aid and cooperated with Maldives for improving its Infrastructure.
- India shares a very close and cordial relationship with Maldives. The year 2015 marked the 50th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.
- India has earlier extended financial assistance for development projects in Maldives –
 - Renovation of Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital in Male
 - Construction of training centre for Maldives Defence forces.
 - Assistance in setting up of Maldives Police Academy
- Other than that India also agreed to allow visa-free entry to citizens of Maldives for medical purposes.

Recent discontent

- Until a few years ago, the Maldives affirmed an “India First” policy.
- The project of building an airport by Indian company GMR was terminated without proper procedure. As a result, India cancelled the credit to Maldives and halted

- **User-friendly strips** of ELISA TEST for animals of animals must be provide to farmers, as they could check the time for reproduction of their livestock, which may eventually result in taking better care of the animals.
- Maintaining the biodiversity of animals in the ecosystem could lessen the effect of environmental imbalance.
- Conservation and preservation of endangered animals using different methods in biotechnology could save important genetic materials for future reconstruction of extinct species or even the most endangered one.

many infrastructure projects like police academy that was under development.

- The Ex-president of Maldives Mohammed Nasheed was arrested and manhandled on account of terror charges in 2015. India expressed its concerns over this arrest.
- India also expressed its concerns over the extension of the emergency

Period by President Abdulla Yameen.

- The Maldives has conveyed to India that it will not extend beyond June 30 the lease of Indian helicopters or the visas of personnel manning them.
- This signals a brief breakdown in the ties of countries which usually coordinate maritime and EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone) patrols together.
- The Maldives government even **SUSPENDED THREE MEMBERS OF A LOCAL BODY** for meeting the **INDIAN AMBASSADOR** without prior approval.



The Chinese bypass

- Maldives's closeness to China has increased as big infrastructure projects have been given to Chinese companies and Chinese naval ships were allowed to dock in Male

- Maldives recently signed its Free Trade Agreement with China; this is Maldives's first FTA with any country and China's second FTA with any country in South Asia after Pakistan.
- The trade pact would open Maldives to Chinese goods and tourists in unprecedented numbers.
- India is concerned with this initiative, because there is a possibility of military presence of Chinese in the island nation.
- China and the Maldives had signed a protocol to build the joint ocean observation station during the visit of Maldives President Abdulla Yameen here in December last.



- The station which will come at Makunudhoo Island of the Maldives is not far from Kerala and Sri Lankan coast. It is also considered as major security threat to India.

Way forward

- The Indian government must send a clear message to Maldives that to contain its limits in the suppressing the democratic character of the nation.
- India must play a strategic role in the upcoming elections, which must be conducted in a free and fair manner to restore the democracy in Maldives.
- It can also try with economic blockades and sanctions on Maldives, along with other countries and organisations to restrict the unethical behaviour of present government.
- India must undertake a PROACTIVE STRATEGY in order to plan and overcome future problems with the neighbouring nations.
- The potential impact of the Maldives political turmoil will affect the regional stability on Indian Ocean region.

INDIA'S WORLD: Afghanistan and Regional Stability

Why in news?

- Taliban fighters launched an assault on the city of Ghazni in Afghanistan beginning on 10th August 2018, which resulted in the deaths of hundreds of insurgents, soldiers, police and civilians.
- The Afghan Government was successful in control of Ghazni city after five

Days of fighting

- The terrorist groups of ISIS and Taliban are the major reason for the creation of instability in and around Afghanistan.



Why stability in Afghanistan is so important?

- Afghanistan has a **strategic location** and it connected the cultures of the Middle East and other parts of Asia by the Silk Road.
- Afghanistan, located in South Asia, is a **landlocked country** bordered by Pakistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and China.
- It acted as a passageway during the invasions of the Indian subcontinent. It is still important during modern era warfare in the nation.
- Its border has become so porous due to the fringe group activities and causes huge troubles to the neighbouring nations.

Historical background

- It was the part of "**THE GREAT GAME**" between British and Russian empires till the 19th century.
- It became free of foreign influence after the **ANGLO-AFGHAN TREATY, 1919**.
- It then became a monarchy till 1970s, then Taliban then ruled it after 1996 as a complete regime
- It was removed by NATO-led coalition in 2001 forming a new democratically elected government.

Present status

- Even after the removal of Taliban from power in Afghanistan, it still faces several internal issues and attacks by groups like Taliban and ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria).
- Taliban still control very large part of Afghanistan and their recruitment process is still going on, which is a major threat to the younger generation of the country.
- US led **NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization)** forces have been in Afghanistan from 2001. They are trying to establish Rule of law in Afghanistan.



The Indian goodwill

- India has focused on development of infrastructure and military aid in Afghanistan. E.g. Salma **dam**

- India is the largest regional provider of humanitarian and reconstruction aid to Afghanistan.
- India wants to improve transport connectivity and economic collaboration with countries in Central and South Asia. For eg **Chabahar port in Iran**.
- There is large extent of goodwill among afghan people about India for its humanitarian and reconstruction development it is aiding in.

Way forward

- The continuous rupturing process of democracy in Afghanistan is posing a major threat to the Asian countries.
- **“THE HEART OF ASIA”** summit has taken some initiatives in order to bring back peace in Afghanistan.
- Yet, we need some **strong regional grouping** both **diplomatic and military** to help in improving the control of Afghanistan Government over the region and tackle threats like terrorism and extremism in the region.
- In this regional grouping India should play a vital role in bringing back democracy and help in creating stability in its neighbouring nation.

All India Radio – News Analysis

NEWS ANALYSIS: UDAAN Scheme

What Is UDAAN?

- The acronym for UDAAN is (Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik).
- This scheme is an innovative scheme to develop the regional aviation market. The central government unveiled a draft scheme for affordable air travel to international route.

When Was It Launched?

- It was launched in 2016 but was inaugurated by prime minister on 27 April 2017

Fund Allocation:

- The total fund allocated is 45 million with an initial fund for development of 50 regional airports and the subsidised ticket was put at Rs 5000.

Components of the scheme

- There are 2 components of the scheme one was to develop a new and enhance the existing regional airports to increase the number of operational airports from 70 and plus another 28 from air force to 150 by December 2018.

What UDAAN Focuses on?

- UDAAN focuses on majorly north eastern states. The air connectivity can be easiest way because of terrain.

Objectives of the scheme

- The objective of the UDAN scheme is to enhance international air connectivity between Indian states and international destinations.

- This scheme will involve a state government led effort wherein state governments will propose the list of routes to be connected presently the state of Assam and Andhra Pradesh have come forward to participate under the schemes and have identified the 8 routes.

Advantages of the Scheme

- It makes air travel affordable and widespread
- It will boost the inclusive national economic development, job growth and air-traffic infrastructure development
- If we extend the scheme in all over neighbouring countries, it will also be a part of SAARC agenda
- It will also be a beneficiary to other key government schemes like Bharatmala, Sagarmala, industrial corridor, Bharatnet, digital India, make-in India, startup India, standup India.
- We are not only creating the jobs in aviation sector and also helping the growth of aviation sector in US and Europe.
- From the point of tourism, India gets developed.

Conclusion

- The UDAN is likely to give a major flick to tourism and employment generation. It is also likely to significantly reduce travel timings in remote and hilly regions, as well as islands and other areas of the country.

MONEY TALK: India Elevation to STA-1 Status

What is STA?

- The acronym for STA is strategic trade authorization allows license exception with regards to export from US government authorization allows a certain item to be exported under defined condition without a transaction specific license.

Current report

- US made change in its trade plans regarding India and it basically allocated STA-1 to India a big deal for us

Origin

Over the years India has been going closer to US in foreign policy part of that STA particularly in defence and given the fact that we did want to move closer to US for nuclear agreement also to

increase exports to India and also India has a trade deficit with US

- There are 36 countries in total in STA-1 list. Apart from India, other Asian countries like Japan and South Korea are there in STA-1 list
- So far, we are almost dependent on Russia and it is never a good idea to be dependent on any country like a friend could turn into foe
- It will expand the scope of exports to India without individual licenses. This regulatory change will enhance the bilateral defence trade relationship and result in a greater volume of US strategic exports to India. This will help India getting critical and latest technology from US in the defence as well as other areas.

- It is a sign of trust only in the relationship with US but also on Indian capabilities as a responsible economy and as a security partner because it also presupposes that India has the multilateral export control regime in place which would allow the transfer of more sensitive defence technologies and dual use of technologies to India and without the risk of any proliferation.

- It is also a boost for the foundational communications, compatibility and security agreement (COMCASA).
- India and US share an interesting in countering china's expanding economic and military weight.

MONEY TALK: Resolution of NPAs - Inter Creditor Agreement

Why in News?

- Supposed to be the historic occasion as many Public sector banks (PSB) and the Financial institutions have signed the Inter-Creditor Agreement (ICA).

What is the Agreement?

- It forms a part of Project **Sashakt**: An attempt to solve NPA problem
- Aims to speed up the resolution of stressed assets that are under Rs 50 crore to Rs 500 crore bracket.

Non-Performing Asset (NPA)

A loan (an asset for the bank) turns as NPA when the EMI, principal or interest component for the loan is not paid within 90 days from the due date. When the asset is not performing because they become doubtful then NPAs become bad loans.

IBC

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) was enacted in 2016 to facilitate a time-bound resolution for reducing the rising bad loans in the banking system.

What led to its evolution?

- Insolvency and bankruptcy code (IBC) were not working efficiently as institutionally envisaged.
- There was huge load on the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).
- A panel led by banker Sunil Mehta identified the disagreement among joint lenders as the biggest problem in resolution.
- Private sector banks and foreign national banks wanted multiple banking arrangements in terms of flexibility.
- As RBI had much to answer for in terms of the binding agreement, it allowed the consortium which was too tight in the past to be relaxed.
- this broke the discipline down and there was no lead bank in a formal sense.

Conclusion

- So, we need to maintain a two-way relationship with US in defence and other high-tech products.

Provisions

- One lead bank will take up the responsibility to try and understand the resolution.
- 66% majority would be enough to compel the program to go through.
- Allows the selling of stake in the particular loan agreement at 85% of liquidation value.

Challenges

- No resenting bank will be willing to take the responsibility in selling the loans at a deep discount to their face value as the amount of haircut is not known.
- For IBC it was ranging from 60 to 90%.
- No bank can exit out from the agreement.
- Willingness to sacrifice without the fear of CVC, CAG and CBI to come up with a question mark.
- Preferring a judicial route for resolutions.
- A kind of binding agreement with time frame which in the past never worked.

Haircut

It is the difference between the actual dues from a borrower and the amount he settles with the bank. By doing so in settling a loan, the entire loan is written off by the bank concerned and to that extent, the assets shrink.

Way forward

- Agreement has to be driven by the total value of the loan effectively at 66% of lenders.
- For smaller banks, their proportion in the loan will not be as big as the large lenders, this can be a mitigant.
- The decision of taking in the kind of sacrifice must be left to the judgment of the banker, while ensuring accountability.
- Understanding the difference and address the issues on the stock NPA and future flow of NPA.
- To reduce the pressure on NCLT, the number of tribunals must be increased to beef up the mechanism.

- In terms of Housing bank loans, realizing the dynamic situation as value can't be static.

Steps to be taken by the government to ensure that the process works through

- They must keep an arm's length distance and allow banks to function as commercial

MONEY TALK: Growth in Manufacturing Sector

How do you see the kind of robust growth in manufacturing sector especially in relation to quarterly in public sector companies?

- RBI does the every quarterly to analyze over 2000 firms. The data they give is quite accurate. Based on data, RBI comes up with the report which has mentioned the cash shown is surprisingly robust compared to the expected keeping in mind that the petrol prices are going high the economy is getting response of all other earlier reforms that government has done.
- RBI also quite enthusiastic about the business expectations what is expected in the next quarter. The reform process is having some impact. We can expect the robustness had a solid foundation and various measures taken by government irrespective over international scenario.

Does demonetisation affect the manufacturing sector:

- This would be taken into the real effect that the indicators have gone up in automobile sector because of demonetisation the base has come down and that will definitely have some impact in real estate and other sectors,

Does "Make in India" getting momentum:

- Yes, Rs 5000 crore is invested in Noida by SAMSUNG company to double their production. Obviously, government is very keen on trying to get all foreign companies

MONEY TALK: GST Meeting

29th GST council meeting was held on 4th August 2018 at New Delhi.

Introduction

- As we all know India being an evolving and emerging economy, we have always focused on competitive ways is only business office who has got Rs 1000 crore turnover or crores of profit. If we minutely observe we will find out that actually a country is getting better or bigger employment from MSME.
- For last so many years the biggest journey which everyone had kept on getting the

entities, except for the policies like Jan Dhan Yojana.

- Unless they can prove any malafide, must assume that these are bona fide decision taken in interest of the banks.

to import goods to India. By this way employment is being generated in India by the scheme MAKE IN INDIA.

Is telecom sector is shrinking:

- In India there is large number of mobile sectors. It is dual ownership taxes are bit higher on the sales.
- Unlike other countries, Indian people are attached to the phones and they are having 2 or 3 numbers.
- Competition is more in telecom sectors and there are number of telecom services as of now.
- Input cost are basically gone up because of oil and others commodities also which we import, strategic metals, semi-finished products for our factories on china and other place but for a long run, the country becomes more advance uses better manufacturing technology.
- Japan, Korea, Germany are the best manufacturer countries in the world, they have no commodities they import everything.

How would man power cost in INDIA?

- Man-power cost in India is very low, but a study says cost of labour is high because they are not skilled enough. Whatever skills we have in IT sector or other sector the real manufacturing skills are not acquired it enough. Our labour will be efficient and reasonable.

new momentum to it and finally present government had really given a acceleration. It is very important that economy should be recognized in formal ways. Whatever we talk about last decade, especially last one year (i.e. post GST) it is a kind of formalization of MSME.

2 type of formalization

- It is a formalization of direct stake holder and indirect like customers at large. So, every time though there are leakages it is a formal environment. The tax payers have to pay monthly taxes though challan return

can either be “sahaj” or “sugam” where in the first one, report only B2C supplies and other report both B2B and B2C supplies, respectively.

Pre-GST era

- In the pre-GST era there were lots of incentives either through keeping out of bracket, making free from license and MSME has got a greatest contribution to economy. Through GST forum it is one with all kind of approach with MSME addressing the direct stake holder.

Categories in MSME

- There are 3 levels in MSME: micro, small and medium. In this micro will not come under GST. Whereas especially medium, we have found that hardly medium is translated into large organizer. 20-25% of

Money Talk: Resolution of NPA

What is NPA?

- NPA in terms of RBI regulations result out of non-payment of interest for a period of 90 days or non-payment of principle amount for 90 days or more.
- So, beyond that point, it is called Non-Performing Asset. The loan is taken by the company on its assets from the bank. When the asset is not performing because they become doubtful and NPAs from doubtful become bad loans.

5 proposals to resolve NPA:

- The proposals are not new, they are already existing like “old wine in a new bottle”, so these 5 proposals cannot address the issue.

RBI report

- RBI has asked the lenders to report credit information including classification of account as SMA (special mention account) to CRILC on all borrower having an aggressive exposure of Rs 5 crore.

How AMC resolves the NPA problem?

- AMC is nothing but a bad bank with different name which essentially collects money from the public and make as pool of fund
- It transfers the stress from the balance sheet. Bankers feel there is a need for a

the revenue will get increase because of GST.

Highlights of GST council meeting

- GST return filing process gets further simplified.
- Sops for composite dealers get a nod.
- On GST registration.
- Reverse charge mechanism deferred till 30th September 2019.
- Creation of GST appellate tribunal.
- Transporters to take note of heightened e-way bills compliance.
- Rates rationalized. 1211 items are there under GST rate. 350 plus items has been revised of rate will simply indicate that it is balancing out.

Conclusion

- It would be effective when it is coordinated and with a coherent approach.

good and effective NPA resolution system to regain clean balance sheets.

- We need to have multiple mechanisms to solve bad loans by downplaying the time taking resolution process under IBC as a reason for re-visiting bad bank concept.

The government has turned down the idea of bad bank. Defending the government decision to go ahead with IBC (insolvency and bankruptcy code) and not to go by earlier suggestion of setting up a bad bank and would end up being a warehouse of bad loans.

How commercial banking is done?

It should be not only based on the government alone and also focuses on regulations also. RBI has a strong presence on the border on the private sector banks. The only answer lies in

- Improving governance in the public sector banks
- Allowing them to function properly.
- Beating the regulations in the public sector banks.

Conclusion

- Every country faces banking crisis. Our country has not come into it. So, it is in the hands of the government and it can be resolved.