

OFFICERS'

Pulse

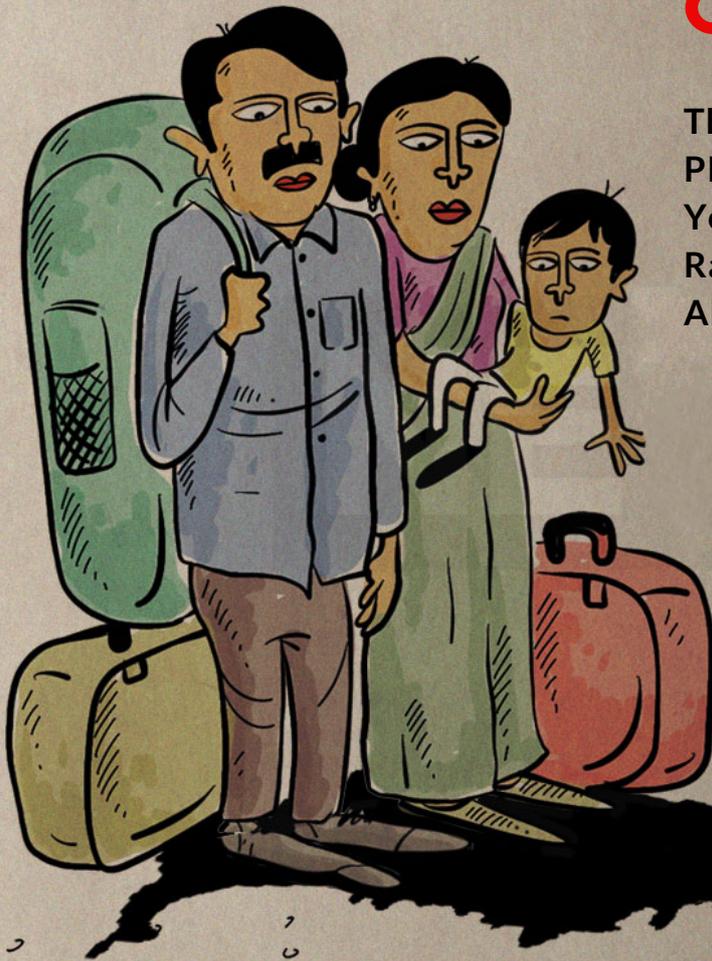
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Coverage.

The Hindu
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Yojana
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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

1) Over 19 lakh excluded from Assam's final NRC

GS Paper II - Polity and governance; Citizenship

- More than 19 lakh of the 3.29 crore applicants in Assam were left out of the final National Register of Citizens (NRC) that was published on 31st august 2019. In the year 2018, 40.37 lakh people out of 3.29 crore people were not included in the NRC list. Now, the final NRC list will include the names of those people who are citizens of Assam or their parents came here and settled before March 24, 1971. Hence the final list is under the direction of the Supreme Court.

What is NRC?

- The NRC is a list of all citizens domiciled in Assam and is currently being updated to retain bonafide citizens within the state and to expel immigrants illegally came from Bangladesh. Citizenship is being identified in Assam for the first time since 1951 because of a large number of people living illegally in the state.

The process

- NRC update in Assam differs from the rest of the country and is governed by Rule 4A and the corresponding Schedule of the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003. These rules were framed as per the cut-off date of the midnight of March 24, 1971, enshrined in the Assam Accord of 1985.
- The NRC sets the cut-off date to be a legal Indian citizen as March 24, 1971 — a date formalised by the Assam Accord, which was signed by the All Assam Students Union, Assam government and Central government in 1985. To be included in the NRC, one needs to prove with documentary evidence that one or one's ancestors had entered the country before the cut-off date.

Hereafter

- Each excluded person will have 120 days to file an appeal at any of the existing 100 Foreigners' Tribunals — 200 more are to be established within a month — which in turn will have to dispose of the cases within six months. The appellant then has the option of approaching the High Court and Supreme Court.
- Discussion and analysis - refer editorials section
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/over-19-lakh-excluded-from-assams-final-nrc/article29307099.ece>
- <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/how-to-check-names-in-final-draft-of-assam-national-register-of-citizens-5949823/>

2) President appoints five new Governors

GS PAPER II - polity and governance

- The central government appointed new Governors for five States: Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala and Telangana. Arif Mohammed Khan - Governor of Kerala
- Bhagat Singh Koshyari - Governor of Maharashtra
- Tamilisai Soundararajan - Governor of Telangana
- Bandaru Dattatreya - the Governor of Himachal Pradesh
- Kalraj Mishra, who has been given the charge of Rajasthan, replacing incumbent Governor Kalyan Singh.

Constitutional provisions for appointment of governor:

- Article 153 of the Constitution requires that there shall be a Governor for each State. One person can be appointed as Governor for two or more States.
- Article 155 says that "The Governor of a State shall be appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal".

3. Article 156 provides that "The Governor shall hold office during the pleasure of the President".
 4. The term of the Governor is prescribed as five years.
 5. The only qualifications for appointment as Governor are that he should be a citizen of India and must have completed the age of thirty-five years.
 6. As held by the Supreme Court in 1979, the office of governor of a state is not an employment under the Central government. It is an independent constitutional office and is not under the control of or subordinate to the Central government.
 7. Though the Governor is the executive head of the State and a part of the State Legislature and the administration of the State is carried on in his name, the people of the State or their representatives have no say in the matter of his appointment. While the President is elected by the representatives of the people, namely, the Members of Parliament and the Members of the State Legislatures, the Governor is merely appointed by the President which really means, by the Union Council of Ministers. In as much as the Governor holds office during the pleasure of the President, there is no security of his tenure. He can be removed by the President at any time. There is no provision for impeaching the Governor by the State Legislature.
- <http://legalaffairs.gov.in/sites/default/files/The%20Institution%20of%20Governor%20under%20the%20Constitution.pdf>

3) Aadhar system for NRI's in 3 month

GS Paper II - governance

- The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) has said its systems will be ready within three months to offer the facility of issuing Aadhaar cards to NRIs with Indian passports without the mandatory 180 days waiting period, as announced in the Budget.

Aadhaar Seva Kendras

1. The UIDAI — which has made operational two more Aadhaar Seva Kendras (ASKs) in Bhopal and Chennai after the fourth

centre in Hisar was launched recently. The UIDAI is setting up Aadhaar Seva Kendras — similar to the concept of Passport Seva Kendras — covering 53 cities across the country at an estimated project cost of ₹300-400 crore.

2. These Aadhaar centres, meant to facilitate enrolment, updation and other activities, are UIDAI's own and operate in addition to thousands of centres currently being run by banks and post offices, as well as in government premises (offering similar Aadhaar services).
3. As ASKs have more capacity, more requests for enrolment and updation can be processed on a daily basis compared to other centres. Besides, the new ASK model entails an online appointment management system to allow people to book a slot as per their convenience.
4. The online appointment booking facility is already available at UIDAI's website.

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/nris-to-get-aadhaar-sans-180-day-wait-in-3-months/article29314296.ece>

4) IAF inducts 8 apache helicopter

GS Paper III - Security; defence procurement

- The Indian Air Force (IAF) on Tuesday formally inducted eight AH-64E Apache attack helicopters into service at the Pathankot Air Force Station. Apache is the most advanced multi-role heavy attack helicopter in the world.
- India contracted 22 Apache helicopters from the U.S. government and Boeing in September 2015 and the entire fleet will be in service with the IAF by 2020. The government has also cleared the acquisition of six additional Apaches for the Indian Army which has been formally approved by the U.S.
- The Apache helicopters will be the second US-built helicopters to join the Indian air force fleet. IAF inducted Boeing CH-47F (I) Chinook heavy-lift helicopters on 25 March.

Apache

- The Apache is a stealthy, versatile machine designed for all kinds of missions.

- equipped with laser and infrared systems for day-night operations
- Armed with air- to-surface Hellfire missiles, 70 mm rockets and automatic cannon.
- The helicopter is capable of delivering a variety of weapons which include air-to-ground Hellfire missiles,
- Apache also carries one 30 mm chain gun with 1,200 rounds as part of area weapon sub-system.
- To “add to the lethality of the helicopter” it carries fire control radar, which has a 360 degree coverage and nose mounted sensor suite for target acquisition and night vision systems.
- has modern Electronic Warfare (EW) capabilities to provide versatility to helicopters in a network-centric aerial warfare
- Are day/night, all weather capable and have high agility and survivability against battle damage.

Implications

- The IAF currently flies Soviet-origin Mi-25 and Mi-35 helicopters. The two-pilot Apache, on the other hand is seen, as a dedicated attack chopper that defence analysts say will be a “game changer” in tactical battle scenario.
- With the induction of the Apache AH-64E the IAF has upgraded its inventory to the latest generation of attack helicopters.
- This procurement will enhance the capability of IAF in providing integrated combat aviation cover to the army strike corps.
- <https://www.livemint.com/>
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/iaf-to-induct-8-us-made-apache-helicopters/article29321610.ece>

5) SC to study petition for food for all

GS paper II – Social issues; poverty and nutrition; food security

- The Supreme Court has agreed to examine a plea that starvation deaths continue to eat into the right to life and dignity of social fabric and a “radical” new measure like community kitchens need to be set up across the country to feed the poor and the hungry.

Why?

- Food and Agriculture Report, 2018 stated that India houses 195.9 million of the 821 million undernourished people in the world, accounting for approximately 24% of the world’s hungry population.
- Prevalence of undernourishment in India is 14.8%, higher than both the global and Asian average.
- In 2017, the National Health Survey (NHS) that approximately 19 crore people in the country were compelled to sleep on an empty stomach every night.
- The most alarming figure revealed is that approximately 4500 children die every day under the age of five years in our country resulting from hunger and malnutrition, amounting to over three lakh deaths every year owing to hunger, of children alone”.

What the petition proposes?

- It urged the court to direct the Chief Secretaries across the country to formulate schemes for the implementation of community kitchens to ensure that “no person should sleep on an empty stomach”
- It called for the creation of a national food grid by the Centre that would be beyond the scope of the Public Distribution Scheme (PDS).
- “Direct the National Legal Services Authority to formulate a scheme to further the provisions of Article 51A of the Constitution of India in order to mitigate deaths resulting from hunger, malnutrition and starvation.

Best practices models in the country: (examples could be quoted in essay)

- Tamil Nadu's Amma Unavagam had become a roaring success by involving peers in self-help groups, employing the poor to serve hygienic food to eradicate the gnawing problem of hunger on the streets.
- Rajasthan's Annapurna Rasoi
- Indira Canteens in Karnataka
- Delhi's Aam Aadmi Canteen
- Anna Canteen in Andhra Pradesh
- Jharkhand Mukhyamantri Dal Bhat
- Odisha's Aahar Centre were combating starvation and malnutrition crisis.

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/supreme-court-to-study-plea-for-food-for-all/article29322271.ece>

6) India faces higher mortality from cardiovascular diseases

GS Paper II – Social issues; health; disease burden

The study

- A study done by PURE study, presented at the European Society of Cardiology Congress, tracked over 1,62,000 individuals, aged 35-70 years, living in 21 countries across five continents, over about 9.5 years.

It reveals the following:

- Cardiovascular disease (CVD) continues to be the leading cause of death across the world, but there are significant variations between rich and poor nations
- While in high income countries, death from cancer is twice that of CVD, in low income countries, including India, death from cardiac disease was three times that of cancer.
- The mortality was highest in the Low Income Countries (LIC) despite lower risk factors, and lowest in the High Income Countries (HIC).

Risk factors:

- Indoor air pollution as an emerging source of risk for cardiovascular disease in LIC and MIC.
- Access to quality health care and lack of insurance has a play, leading to the mortality.
- The high mortality in poorer countries is not due to a higher burden of risk factors, but likely other factors including lower quality and less health care.
- **HIC** - Canada, Saudi Arabia, Sweden and United Arab Emirates.
- **MIC** - were Argentina, Brazil, Chile, China, Columbia, Iran, Malaysia, Palestine, Philippines, Poland, Turkey and South Africa.
- **LIC**- Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/india-faces-higher-mortality-from-cardiovascular-diseases/article29325522.ece>

7) Masood Azhar, Hafiz Saeed, Lakhvi, Dawood Ibrahim declared terrorists under new anti-terror law

GS Paper III – Security

- Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) chief Masood Azhar, Hafiz Saeed of the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), his deputy Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi and underworld don Dawood Ibrahim who planned and executed the 1993 Mumbai serial blasts are the first four persons designated as “terrorists” under the anti-terror.
- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) issued a gazette notification declaring the four as 'terrorists' under clause (a) of sub-section (1) of section 35 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), 1967.
- The UAPA was first amended in 2004, then in 2008 and in 2013. The 2004 amendment was to ban organisations for terror activities, under which 34 outfits, including the LeT and the JeM were banned.
- The government had said that the first ones to be designated on a priority basis would be the Pakistan-based terrorists. The designations were in alignment with laws in the European Union (EU) countries, the U.S.A., China and Israel and even in Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/masood-azhar-hafiz-saeed-dawood-ibrahim-declared-terrorists-under-new-anti-terror-law/article29330657.ece>

8) Two Indian cities are in Global Liveability Index 2019

GS Paper II – social issues; urbanization

- In India, New Delhi and Mumbai rank 118th and 119th out of 140 cities according to the Economist Intelligence Unit's Global Liveability Index 2019 released on Wednesday.
- Vienna in Austria, Melbourne and Sydney in Australia make the top three cities in the list while Damascus in Syria, Lagos in Nigeria and Dhaka in Bangladesh rank in the bottom.

Global liveability index – given by Economist Intelligence Unit

- The index assesses which locations around the world provide the best or the

worst living conditions. Each factor in a city is rated as acceptable, tolerable, uncomfortable, undesirable or intolerable.

- The survey ranks countries across indicators:
 - 1.Stability
 - 2.Healthcare
 - 3.Education
 - 4.infrastructure,
 - 5.Culture
 - 6.Environment.

Findings:

- According to the report deterioration in culture and environment scores is of concern including the quality of air in cities like New Delhi.
- New Delhi, which has dropped six ranks since last year's Global Liveability Index has also seen an increase in cases of petty crimes. Mumbai's rank also fell in this year's index by two places, as a result of a downgrade in its culture category.
- A slew of cities in emerging markets that are among the most exposed to the effects of climate change have seen their scores downgraded. These include New Delhi in India, which suffers from appalling air quality, Cairo in Egypt (where air quality is also a major issue) and Dhaka in Bangladesh.
- Of the 37 Asian and Australasian cities included in the index, five are among the ten most liveable and six are among the 20 least liveable.
- <https://www.livemint.com/>

9) Government launches campaign to promote eat right movement

GS Paper II – social issues; food security

- POSHAN Maah 2019 was launched with a year-long social and mass media campaign on the Eat Right India movement. Leading with a tweet-a-day focusing on a weekly theme of eating right for the next 365 days, also launched the new Eat Right India logo that represents a healthy plate, an online eat right quiz and online course for frontline health workers.

WHO has observed that:

- There has been a shift in the cause of mortality from communicable diseases to non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and cancer, not only in India, but also across the world.
- The four main factors to prevent non-communicable diseases are healthy diet, physical exercise, avoidance of tobacco and alcohol. Therefore, the message of 'Eat Right' should be promoted everywhere. Citizens should choose healthy food and the food industry should manufacture healthy food."

Why this movement?

- 1.The country is in need of a movement on preventive health for all in the backdrop of the increasing burden of non-communicable diseases including diabetes, hypertension and heart diseases.
- 2.Widespread deficiencies of vitamins and minerals and rampant food-borne illnesses.
- 3.The Eat Right India movement is a crucial preventive healthcare measure to trigger social and behavioural change.
- 4.Through a judicious mix of regulatory measures, combined with soft interventions for ensuring awareness and capacity building of food businesses and citizens alike.

The movement

- Aligned with the government's flagship public health programmes such as POSHAN Abhiyaan, Anemia Mukta Bharat, Ayushman Bharat Yojana and Swachh Bharat Mission.
- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has also put in place robust regulatory measures under three major pillars: Eat Safe, Eat Healthy and Eat Sustainably for the programme.
- FSSAI has prescribed a limit for Total Polar Compounds (TPC) at 25% in cooking oil to avoid the harmful effects of reused cooking oil.
- Eat Right India takes a holistic approach to food habits that promote health and sustainability.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/govt-launches-campaign-to-promote-eat-right-movement/article29343571.ece>

10) WHO South-East Asia Region plans to banish measles, rubella by 2023

GS Paper II – society and health

- Member-countries of the World Health Organisation (WHO) South-East Asia Region have resolved to eliminate highly infectious childhood killer diseases measles and rubella by 2023.

Resolution

- A resolution to eliminate the diseases was adopted at the 72nd session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia in Delhi. The resolution calls for ensuring a highly sensitive laboratory supported case-based surveillance system – better evidence for appropriate planning and response. It also emphasises on preparedness for outbreak response activities.
- All countries pledged to mobilise political, societal and financial support to ensure the interruption of transmission of indigenous measles and rubella virus by 2023.

Previous efforts

- Measles elimination and rubella control has been a regional flagship priority since 2014.
- Bhutan, DPR Korea, Maldives, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste have eliminated measles and Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste have controlled rubella.

Indian efforts –

- To address this public health concern, India launched the ambitious Measles-Rubella (MR) vaccination drive in February 2017 in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Lakshadweep and Goa. It is the largest such effort anywhere in the world with the target to cover 405 million children in the age group of 9 months–15 years by 2019.
- We have developed indigenous vaccines recently and included it in our universal immunization programme.
- As part of the MR campaign, as of early July 2018, 92 million children have been successfully vaccinated in 20 states across the country.

What is measles?

- Measles is a highly contagious virus, spread by contact with an infected person through coughing and sneezing.
- When one person has measles, 90 percent of the people they come into close contact with will become infected, if they are not already immune.
- Measles weakens the immune system and opens the door to secondary health problems, such as pneumonia, blindness, diarrhoea, and encephalitis.

What is rubella?

- Rubella, also known as “German Measles”, is generally a mild disease but can have serious consequences for pregnant women and their children.
- If infected with rubella in the first trimester women have a very high risk of giving birth to a child with Congenital Rubella Syndrome (CRS).
- CRS often results in multiple birth defects including heart problems, deafness and blindness. More than 100,000 children are born with CRS each year.
- The lifelong complications and disabilities can have an immeasurable emotional, social and financial cost for families.
- Like measles, rubella can be prevented with a safe, effective and inexpensive vaccine. This can be delivered as a rubella vaccine alone, or combined with measles vaccine (MR) or with measles and mumps vaccines (MMR).
- <https://measlesrubellainitiative.org/learn/the-problem/>
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/who-south-east-asia-region-plans-to-banish-measles-rubella-by-2023/article29343912.ece>
- <http://www.searo.who.int/india/topics/measles/MR-campaign-web-success-story/en/>

11) Ministry rolls out 25 new mobile science museums

GS Paper I and III – Science and technology; human resource development; culture; tourism

- Aiming to take science education to students in areas without access to such services, the Union Culture Ministry rolled out 25 new mobile science museums, Union Culture and Tourism Minister of State (independent charge) flagged off the

science museum bus in Leh as a part of the mobile science exhibition programme of the Ministry.

- These museums-on-wheels will travel to schools in the 115 “aspirational districts”.

The programme

- It has been successful in supplementing formal education and creating scientific awareness since its inception in 1965.
- The buses will travel to schools in aspirational districts throughout the year except during the vacations and will aim to create a scientific awareness among the rural children.
- Each specially designed bus contains 20 interactive exhibits and other

demonstrations related to children and rural life.

- The exhibitions cover topics like measurement, machines in everyday life, food and health, chemistry and life with focus on water, energy, hygiene and sanitation and space science for human welfare, the statement said.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/culture-ministry-launches-science-museum-vans-for-aspirational-districts/article29343966.ece>

ENVIRONMENT

1) Colour coded alerts by IMD

What is colour code warning system?

- A colour-coded weather warning system is used to alert the public about the predicted severity of weather: cyclones, floods, storms and winds. The colour system ranges from green, which is low risk, to red, which is the highest risk of severe conditions.
- **Green colour:** This colour implies there is no warning as such, but people should stock essential supplies and create an emergency plan.
- **Yellow colour:** This colour indicates that hazardous conditions are possible and people need to be aware of the potential impacts of the changing weather. In case of a yellow warning, people should monitor weather conditions and pay attention to IMD updates.
- **Orange colour:** Through an orange warning, the IMD indicates a risk to people and property. In this case, IMD asks people to be prepared to safeguard themselves, their family and property.
- **Red colour:** Red colour signifies great risk to people and property. It also suggests that significant damage and disruption could take place. In this case, IMD asks people in the area to take immediate action to protect their property and kin and, if required, move to safer locations.

Why in news?

- Many places in Mumbai suburbs and adjoining areas like Thane and Navi have recorded over 100mm of rainfall in the last 24 hours. In view of the heavy rainfall, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a red alert for Mumbai, Thane, Palghar and Raigad.
- <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.timesnownews.com/amp/india/article/imd-weather-forecast-alert-warning-colour-codes-and-meaning/482431>

2) Great Indian Bustard

Why in news?

- The National Green Tribunal has directed the Centre to prepare a time-bound action

plan within two months for protection of the Great Indian Bustard noting its high mortality rate.

About Great Indian Bustard:

- The Great Indian Bustard, one of the heaviest flying birds, can weigh up to 15 kg and grow up to one metre in height.
- It is considered the flagship grassland species, representing the health of the grassland ecology.
- Listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, in the CMS Convention and in Appendix I of CITES, as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List and the National Wildlife Action Plan (2002-2016).
- It has also been identified as one of the species for the recovery programme under the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India.

Habitat and distribution:

- Historically, the great Indian bustard was distributed throughout Western India, spanning 11 states, as well as parts of Pakistan.
- Its stronghold was once the Thar Desert in the north-west and the Deccan plateau of the peninsula.
- Today, its population is confined mostly to Rajasthan and Gujarat.
- Small population occurs in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.
- Bustards generally favour flat open landscapes with minimal visual obstruction and disturbance, therefore adapt well in grasslands.
- In the non-breeding season they frequent wide agro-grass scrub landscapes. While in the breeding season (summers and monsoons) they congregate in traditional undisturbed grassland patches characterized by a mosaic of scantily grazed tall grass (below 50 cm).
- They avoid grass taller than themselves and dense scrub like thickets.

Threats to the bird:

- Hunting
- occasional poaching outside Protected Areas

- Collisions with high tension electric wires,
- Fast moving vehicles and
- Free-ranging dogs in villages.

Other threats include

- Habitat loss and alteration as a result of widespread agricultural expansion and mechanized farming,
- Infrastructural development such as irrigation, roads, electric poles, as well as mining and industrialization.



- https://www.wwfindia.org/about_wwf/priority_species/threatened_species/great_indian_bustard/

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ECONOMY

1) Higher procurement price for ethanol

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet on Tuesday (03/09/2019) approved a **higher procurement price for ethanol** purchased by oil marketing companies (OMCs) for the **ethanol blended petrol (EBP) programme**, which will come into effect from December 1 **for a period of one year**.

News in Detail

- According to the new decision, the price of ethanol from C-heavy molasses will be increased from Rs. 43.46 per litre to Rs. 43.75 per litre.
- The price of ethanol from B-heavy molasses will be increased from Rs. 52.43 per litre to Rs. 54.27 per litre.
- The price of ethanol from sugarcane juice, sugar, and sugar syrup has been set at Rs. 59.48 per litre.
- The OMCs will also pay the Goods and Services Tax and transportation tax associated with the ethanol supply.
- OMCs are to continue according **priority of ethanol from 1) sugarcane juice/sugar/sugar syrup, 2) B-heavy molasses 3) C-heavy molasses and 4) damaged food grains/other sources**, in that order.
- For the first time sugar and sugar syrup are allowed for ethanol production.
- **Sugarcane molasses** is a viscous, dark and sugar-rich **by-product of sugar extraction** from sugarcane (*Saccharum officinarum* L.). It is a major feed ingredient, used as an energy source and as a binder in compound feeds. Both the sugar extraction process and the sugar refining process yield molasses, and each step of these processes output specific types of molasses such as
 - **A molasses** (first molasses) is an intermediate by-product resulting from first sugar crystal extraction, from initial processing at the sugar factory.
 - **B molasses** (second molasses) contains less sugar and does not spontaneously crystallize.

- **C molasses** (final molasses, blackstrap molasses, treacle) is the end by-product of the processing in the sugar factory. It still contains considerable amounts of sucrose. It does not crystallize and can be found in liquid or dried form as a commercial feed ingredient.

Significance

- Increased ethanol blending in petrol has many benefits including reduction in import dependency, support to agricultural sector, more environmental friendly fuel, lesser pollution and additional income to farmers.

Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/business/cabinet-approves-higher-procurement-price-for-ethanol/article29325411.ece>

2) Recommendations of Committee on Fintech

Why in News?

- The **Steering Committee on Fintech** has submitted its **report to the Finance Ministry**.

Financial technology (Fintech) is used to describe new tech that seeks to improve and automate the delivery and use of financial services.

Background

- The committee was formed in March 2018 under the chairmanship of the **Economic Affairs Secretary** to consider various issues relating to the development of the fintech sector in India, and how fintech can be used to enhance the financial inclusion of micro, small and medium enterprises.

Key recommendations of the committee

- The Department of Financial Services and the Reserve Bank of India may examine the **suitability of 'virtual banking system'** in the Indian context and prepare for a possible future scenario where banks do not need to set up branches and yet deliver the full-scale retail banking services through their app or website.
- The government and the RBI to take steps to eliminate any discrimination in access to payment infrastructure to non-banks as

compared to banks, with a view to enhance competition and innovation.

- Use of fintech, especially by PSE (public sector enterprise) financial service companies to bolster cybersecurity, fraud control and anti-money laundering.
- NBFCs in Fintech should be incentivised to work in the agricultural space by including them in credit guarantee schemes.
- **Improving debt financing** in India by developing a marketplace model by **reforming** the current **peer-to-peer (P2P) lending platforms**.
- **Ease KYC norms** through **video-based KYC** and use of **Digi Locker**.

- **Peer-to-peer (P2P) lending (social lending or crowd lending)** enables individuals to obtain loans directly from other individuals, **cutting out the financial institution as the middleman**.
- **Digi Locker** is Government of India's **cloud based platform for issuance and verification of documents & certificates digitally**.

Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/business/fintech-panel-bats-for-virtual-banks-easing-kyc-norms/article29325513.ece>
- <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/f/fintech.asp>
- <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/p/peer-to-peer-lending.asp>

3) India among top 10 nations in gold reserves

Why in News?

- India has surpassed Netherland to move into the list of top ten countries in terms of total gold reserves.

News in detail

- According to the **World Gold Council**, India has gold reserves totalling 618.2 tonnes, which is marginally higher than the Netherlands' reserves of 612.5 tonnes.
- In terms of individual countries, India actually ranks ninth since the International Monetary Fund (IMF) occupies the third position after the U.S. and Germany.
- India's entry into the list of top ten countries comes at a time when the

quantum of monthly purchases is the lowest in over three years.

- India's gold reserves have grown substantially in the past couple of decades from 357.8 tonnes in the first quarter of 2000 to the current 618.2 tonnes.
- **U.S. leads** the country list with total gold reserves of 8,133.5 tonnes followed by Germany, IMF, Italy, France, Russia, China, Switzerland and Japan before **India at the 10th spot**.

The **World Gold Council** is the market development organisation for the gold industry. It works to stimulate and sustain demand for gold, provide industry leadership, and be the global authority on the gold market.

Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/business/india-among-top-10-nations-in-gold-reserves/article29334273.ece>
- <https://www.gold.org/>

4) Mandatory external benchmark-based lending

Why in News?

- The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** (04/09/19) made it **mandatory** for all **banks to link floating rate loans** — to retail customers and loans to micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) — **to an external benchmark** (to be effective from **October 1, 2019**).

Need for external benchmark-based lending

- The move is aimed at **faster transmission of monetary policy rates**. The transmission of policy rate changes to the lending rate of banks under the **current MCLR framework** has not been satisfactory.
- **Banks have been reluctant** to cut interest rates despite the RBI lowering the repo rate by 110 basis points (bps) between February and August.

- The **marginal cost of funds-based lending rate (MCLR)** is the minimum interest rate that a bank can lend at.
- MCLR is a **tenor-linked internal benchmark**, which means the rate is determined internally by the bank depending on the **period left for the repayment of a loan**.
- MCLR is closely linked to the actual deposit rates and is calculated based on **four components**: the **marginal cost of funds, negative carry on account of cash reserve ratio, operating costs and tenor premium**.

Other key points

- Banks can choose from one of the four external benchmarks — **repo rate, three-month treasury bill yield, six-month treasury bill yield** or any other benchmark interest rate published by **Financial Benchmarks India Private Ltd**.
- Adoption of multiple benchmarks by the same bank is not allowed within a loan category.
- While banks are free to decide on the spread over the external benchmark, **credit risk premium** can change only when borrower's credit assessment undergoes a substantial change.
- Existing loans and credit limits linked to the MCLR, base rate or BPLR, would continue till repayment or renewal.

- The **Benchmark Prime Lending Rate (BPLR)** was introduced by the Reserve Bank of India in the year **2003** with the aim of introducing **transparency** and ensuring appropriate pricing of loans, wherein the lending rates truly reflect the actual costs. It was envisaged as a reference rate and was to be computed taking into consideration (i) **cost of funds**; (ii) **operational expenses**; and (iii) a **minimum margin to cover regulatory requirements of provisioning and capital charge, and profit margin**.

Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/business/external-benchmark-based-lending-must-rbi/article29334249.ece>
- <https://www.livemint.com/>
- <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/the-bplr-story/articleshow/5578374.cms?from=mdr>

5) Traffic offences to be linked with motor insurance premium

Why in News?

- **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** forms working group to examine linking motor insurance premium with traffic violations.

Terms of reference of the working group

- The group will study international practices and recommend best practices suitable to India.
- It will evaluate the current point system for traffic violations implemented by States and evolve a standard point system considering each violation.
- Other terms of reference include **developing data fields** required to implement **traffic violations as a rating factor in motor insurance** and suggesting a system of access to traffic violation data history of each vehicle and transfer of data from enforcement authorities to the database of the **Insurance Information Bureau of India (IIBI)**.
- The group will also suggest modalities for carrying out a pilot project immediately at the National Capital Territory of Delhi.

Significance

- It is expected to **improve compliance to rules** and pave the way for **more business for insurers**.
- For those with more traffic violations, it would eventually mean a higher insurance premium.

Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/traffic-offences-may-cost-a-premium/article29355022.ece>

International Relations

1) IAF inducts eight U.S.-made Apache attack helicopters

Why in News?

- The Indian Air Force (IAF) on Tuesday formally inducted eight **AH-64E Apache attack helicopters** into service at the **Pathankot Air Force Station**.
- Apache attack helicopters are being purchased to replace the Mi-35 fleet.

Background

- India contracted 22 Apache helicopters from the U.S. government and Boeing in September 2015 and the entire fleet will be in service with the IAF by 2020.
- The government has also cleared the acquisition of six additional Apaches for the Indian Army which has been formally approved by the U.S.

More about Apache helicopters

- Apache is the **most advanced multi-role heavy attack helicopter** in the world. It is being made in the US by **Boeing**.
- Alongside the capability to shoot **fire and forget anti-tank guided missiles**, rockets and other ammunitions, it also has modern **Electronic Warfare (EW) capabilities** to provide versatility to helicopters in a network-centric aerial warfare.
- The helicopter is capable of delivering a variety of weapons which include **air-to-ground Hellfire missiles**, **70 mm Hydra rockets** and **air-to-air Stinger missiles**.
- Apache also carries one **30 mm chain gun** with **1,200 rounds** as part of **area weapon sub-system** and to “add to the lethality of the helicopter” it carries fire control radar, which has a **360° coverage** and **nose mounted sensor suite for target acquisition** and **night vision systems**.
- India is the **16th nation** to select the Apache and the AH-64E is the **most advanced** variant.
- These helicopters had been modified specifically to suit the exacting standards demanded by the IAF.
- This procurement will enhance the capability of IAF in providing integrated combat aviation cover to the army strike corps.

- These helicopters are day/night, all weather capable and have high agility and survivability against battle damage.

Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/iaf-to-induct-8-us-made-apache-helicopters/article29321610.ece>

2) Russia to train Indian astronauts

Why in News?

- India is taking Moscow's help for the maiden manned mission to space **Gaganyaan**.

News in Detail

- India and Russia are stepping up cooperation in the space sector with Moscow extending help in 4-5 critical areas of India's ambitious manned mission to space, *Gaganyaan*.
- This includes **training of Indian astronauts** at Russian facilities beginning by November, 2019.
- A special ISRO unit will be established in the embassy in Moscow to facilitate increased cooperation between India and Russia in view of the Gaganyaan programme.

Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/russia-to-train-four-indian-astronauts-for-gaganyaan/article29316290.ece>

3) India and Russia sign 25 agreements

Why in News?

- PM Narendra Modi was in Russia as the chief guest of the **5th Eastern Economic Forum**, held in Vladivostok.
- PM Modi also took part in the **20th India-Russia Annual Summit** and held bilateral talks with President Vladimir Putin.
- Modi is the first-ever Indian Prime Minister to visit the far eastern region of Russia (Vladivostok).

The **Eastern Economic Forum** was established by decree of the **President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin** in **2015** to support the economic development of Russia's Far East and to expand international cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region.

The Forum presents enormous potential for developing close and mutually beneficial cooperation between India and Russia in the region.

Key outcomes

- The two sides exchanged numerous agreements, including military and technical cooperation, energy and science, LNG Business and LNG supplies, and natural gas.
- Russia is planning to set up more than 20 nuclear power units in India in the next 20 years.
- A proposal was also made between India and Russia to have a full-fledged **maritime route** that serves as a link between **Chennai and Vladivostok**.
- Both sides decided to widen their trade, investment, energy and ICT partnership including **five year roadmap for hydro-carbon sector** (2019-24) comprising joint development of oil and gas fields in Russia and India, including offshore fields.
- Both Sides expressed their interest in expanding the participation of Russian business in "Make in India" program and that of Indian companies in investment projects in Russia. In this context, they agreed to speed up preparations for signing of the **India-Russia Intergovernmental Agreement on Promotion and Mutual Protection of Investments**.
- The Sides agreed to intensify joint work towards eliminating barriers in mutual trade, including protective measures, customs and administrative barriers, to further consider reducing restrictive measures through bilateral dialogue. This would be facilitated, inter alia, by the proposed **Trading Agreement** between the **Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU)** and India.
- It was also decided to step up industrial cooperation and create new technological and investment partnership, especially in

advanced high-tech areas, with an aim to increase bilateral trade to \$30 billion by 2025 (\$8.2 billion during 2018-19).

India and Russia share a **Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership**

The **Eurasian Economic Union** is an international organization for **regional economic integration**. It has international legal personality and is established by the **Treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union**. The Member-States are **the Republic of Armenia, the Republic of Belarus, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and the Russian Federation**.

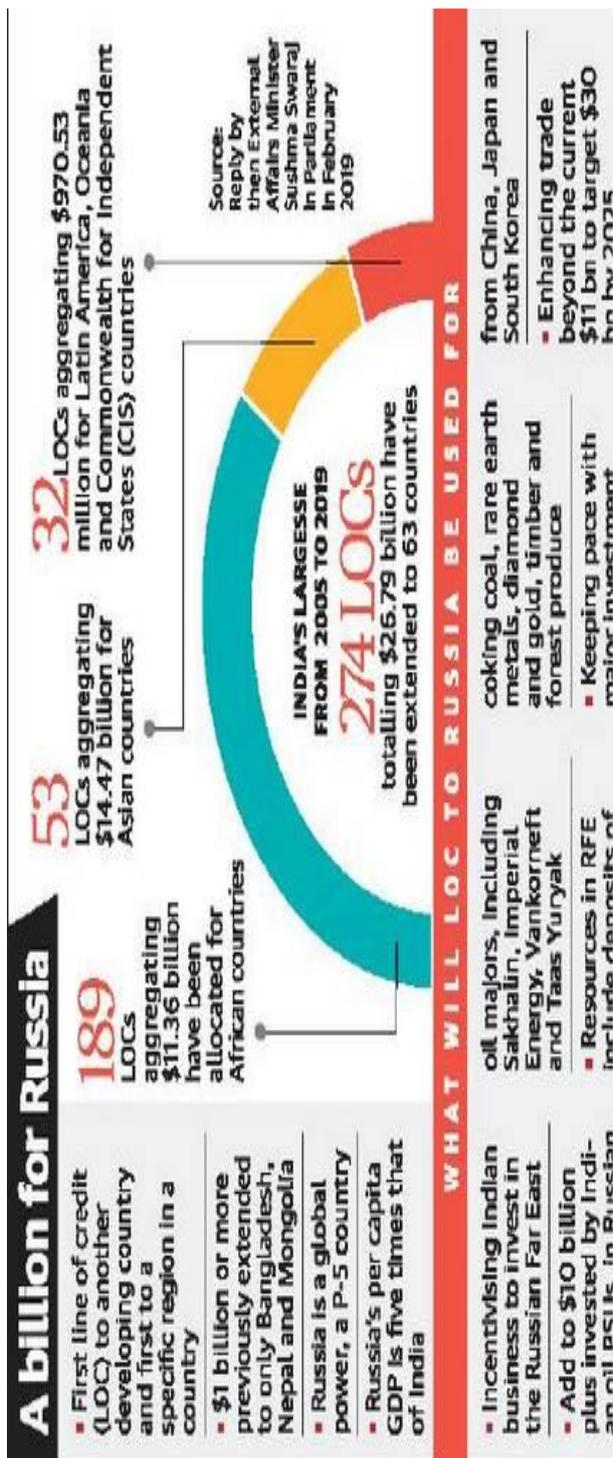
Source

- <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/russia-plans-to-set-up-above-20-nuclear-power-units-in-india-in-next-20-years-1567600889899.html>
- <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/india-russia-sign-roadmap-for-cooperation-in-hydrocarbon-sector/articleshow/70979250.cms>
- <https://forumvostok.ru/en/about-the-forum/>
- <http://www.eaeunion.org/?lang=en#about>
- <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/india-russia-agree-to-step-up-trade-to-30-bn-by-2025/article29332019.ece>

4) **India's Line of Credit to Russia**

Why in News?

- India extends **\$1 billion line of credit** (LOC) for the development of the resource-rich region of Russia's Far East. It was announced by PM Modi at the plenary session of **5th Eastern Economic Forum**.
- "**Act Far East**" policy was unveiled to boost India's engagement with Russia's Far East region. It is said to be an extension to India's Act East policy.



Act East Policy

- The focus of the Act East policy, which began as a “**Look East policy**” launched in 1991 was to shift the country's trading focus from the west and neighbour to the booming South East Asian countries.
- Its major objectives are to increase the interaction of the northeastern Indian states with other neighbouring countries and to curb the increasing impact of China

in the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) region.

- Some of the major projects in this collaboration with South-East Asian countries include the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, the India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway Project, Border Haats and Rhi-Tiddim Road Project, etc.
- The distinction between the 'Look East' and 'Act East' policy is that the former aimed to increase economic ties with only the "South-East Asian countries" whereas the latter aimed to increase economic as well as defence-related ties with "Southeast and East Asian countries".

Issues

- The rationale of extending LOC to another developing country especially when India's economic growth is slowing down is questioned by many in India.
- Critics pointed out that while Russia's GDP figures are far behind India's in recent years (\$1.6 trillion vs \$2.6 trillion at current prices, 2017), the GDP per capita for the average Russian is five times that for the average Indian (\$10,961 vs \$2,014 at current prices, 2017 - IMF World Economic Outlook Database).

Indian business in Russia so far

- Indian firms have invested over \$7 billion in taking stake in Russian oil and gas fields.
- India ventured into Russia when its flagship overseas firm **ONGC Videsh (OVL)** in 2001 acquired a 20 per cent stake in **Sakhalin-1** oil and gas field in Far East Russia.
- OVL later bought Imperial Energy, which has fields in Siberia, as also stakes in **Vankor** oilfield in eastern Siberia.
- **IOC (Indian Oil Corporation)** and its partners have picked up 29.9 per cent stake in a separate **Taas-Yuryakh** oilfield in East Siberia.

Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/india-extends-1-billion-line-of-credit-for-development-of-russias-far-east/article29340207.ece>
- <https://www.firstpost.com/india/narendra-modi-launches-act-far-east-policy-here-is-all-you-need-to-know-about->

[proposed-new-trade-ties-with-russia-7294871.html](https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/opposition-questions-aid-to-russia/article29354896.ece)

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/opposition-questions-aid-to-russia/article29354896.ece>

5) India, South Korea seal logistics pact

Why in News?

- Two MoUs to further defence educational exchanges and **extend logistical support** to each other's **Navies** were signed.
- The two countries also formulated a forward-looking road map to take

bilateral defence industry cooperation to the next level.

Significance of the MoU

- India will be able to get assured logistic support when it operates in the Indo-Pacific in the ports of South Korea.
- Such agreements extend the reach, presence and sustainability of Navy ships when deployed at great distances from home ports, the source added.

Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-south-korea-seal-logistics-pact/article29354781.ece>

SCIENCE and TECHNOLOGY

1) Indus Valley settlers had a distinct genetic lineage

Why in News?

- A study of DNA from skeletal remains excavated from the Harappan cemetery at Rakhigarhi throws **fresh light on the Indus Valley Civilisation**.

Findings of the study

- The researchers had successfully sequenced the first genome of an individual from Harappa and combining it with archaeological data, found that **hunter-gatherers of South Asia**, who then became a settled people, **had an independent origin**.
- The study finds that the same hunter-gatherer communities developed into agricultural communities and formed the Harappan civilisation. The **genetic continuity from hunter gatherer to modern times** is visible in the **DNA results**.
- The researchers who conducted the study contend that the theory of the Harappans having Steppe pastoral or ancient Iranian farmer ancestry thus stands refuted.
- The finding also negates the hypothesis about mass migration during Harappan times from outside South Asia.
- The researchers also suggest that there was a **movement** of people from **east to west** as the **Harappan people's presence** is evident at sites like **Gonur in Turkmenistan** and **Sahr-i-Sokhta in Iran**.
- There was a hint that settled life and domestication went from South Asia to West Asia.
- As the Harappans traded with Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Persian Gulf and almost all across South Asia, there was bound to be movement of people resulting in a **mixed genetic history**. India had a heterogeneous population right from the beginning of settled life.

Origin of farming

- In **Europe**, ancient-DNA studies have shown that **agriculture** tended to spread through an **influx of people with ancestry in Anatolia**, in modern day Turkey.

- The new study shows a **similar dynamic in Iran and Turan** (southern Central Asia), where the researchers found that Anatolian-related ancestry and farming arrived around the same time.
- But with respect to **South Asia**, researchers find **no trace of the Anatolian-related ancestry** that is a hallmark of the spread of farming to the west, but the Iranian-related ancestry they detected in South Asians comes from a lineage that separated from ancient Iranian farmers and hunter-gatherers before those groups split from each other, nearly 9000 years ago.
- The researchers, therefore, concluded that farming in South Asia was not due to the movement of people from the farming cultures of the west and that local foragers adopted it.
- Prior to the arrival of steppe pastoralists bringing their Indo-European languages about 4,000 years ago, the report cited no evidence of large-scale movements of people into South Asia.

Details of the study

- The Rakhigarhi study was reported in a paper titled "**An Ancient Harappan Genome Lacks Ancestry from Steppe Pastoralists or Iranian farmers**" in the journal *Cell* on September 5, 2019.

Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/indus-valley-settlers-had-a-distinct-genetic-lineage/article29355941.ece>

2) Chandrayaan II - mission in detail

- Chandrayaan 2 is an Indian lunar mission that boldly attempted to go where no country has ever gone before — the Moon's South Polar Region.
- Through this effort, the aim is to **improve our understanding of the Moon** — discoveries that will benefit India and humanity as a whole. These insights and experiences aim at a paradigm shift in how lunar expeditions are approached for years to come — propelling further voyages into the farthest frontiers.

Description

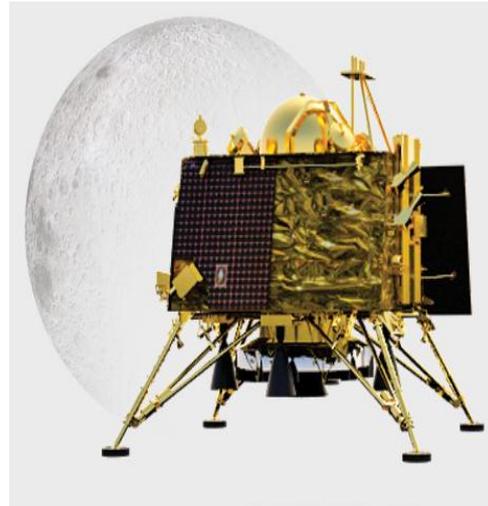
- Chandrayaan 2 is an Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) mission comprising an **orbiter** and a **soft lander carrying a rover**, launched to **the Moon** in July 2019.
- The **primary objective** of Chandrayaan 2 is to **demonstrate the ability to soft-land on the lunar surface** and **operate a robotic rover on the surface**.
- **Scientific goals** include studies of **lunar topography, mineralogy, elemental abundance, the lunar exosphere, and signatures of hydroxyl and water ice**.

Spacecraft and Subsystems

i) Orbiter



- The Chandrayaan 2 orbiter is a box-shaped craft with an orbital mass of 2379 kg and solar arrays capable of generating 1000 W power.
- The orbiter communicates with the **Indian Deep Space Network (IDSN)** and the lander.
- The orbiter will have a scientific payload comprising a visible terrain mapping camera, a neutral mass spectrometer, a synthetic aperture radar, a near infrared spectrometer, a radio occultation experiment, a soft X-ray spectrometer and solar X-ray monitor.
- The orbiter portion of the mission is planned to last 1 year.



ii) Lander - Vikram

- The **lander**, named **Vikram**, has a mass of 1471 kg (including the rover), and can generate 650 W of solar power.
- The Lander is designed to execute a soft landing on the lunar surface.
- The lander can communicate directly to the IDSN, the orbiter, and the rover.
- The lander will carry a camera, seismometer, thermal profiler, Langmuir probe, and a NASA-supplied laser retroreflector.



iii) Rover - Pragyan

- The rover, Pragyan ('wisdom' in Sanskrit), is a 6-wheeled vehicle with a mass of 27 kg that runs on 50 W of solar power and can travel up to 500 m at a speed of 1 cm per second.
- The rover communicates directly with the lander.
- The rover will hold cameras, alpha-proton X-ray spectrometer, and a laser-induced ablation spectroscopy experiment.
- The rover was to be deployed using a ramp shortly after landing.
- The lander and rover portions of the mission were planned for 14-15 days, one period of lunar daylight.

Mission Profile

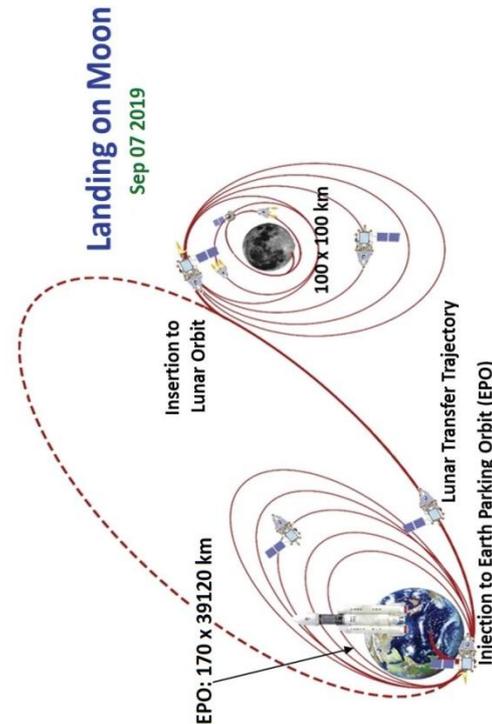
- Chandrayaan 2 was launched on 22 July 2019 at 2:43 p.m. (Indian Standard Time) from Satish Dhawan Space Center on Sriharikota Island on an ISRO **Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) Mark III**.
- The lander-orbiter pair went into an initial elliptical (170 x 40400 km altitude) **Earth Parking Orbit**, followed by a trans-lunar injection on 14 August.
- The pair entered lunar polar orbit on 20 August. The lander and orbiter separated on September 2.
- The orbiter evolves into a 100 km altitude circular polar orbit and the Vikram lander maneuvered into a 30 x 100 km orbit with a plan to land on the surface in the high latitude (70°S) areas near the south pole, between two craters, **Manzinus C** and **Simpelius N**, on 7 September between about 1:30 and 2:30 a.m. Indian local time.
- **Contact was lost** during the descent at an altitude of about **2.1 km**, the data are being analyzed.

A **parking orbit** is a **temporary orbit** used during the launch of a satellite or other space probe. A launch vehicle boosts into the parking orbit, and then coasts for a while, then fires again to enter the final desired trajectory.

The **alternative** to a parking orbit is **direct injection**, where the rocket fires continuously (except during staging) until its fuel is exhausted, ending with the payload on the final trajectory.

What makes Chandrayaan 2 special?

- 1st space mission to attempt a soft landing on the Moon's South Polar Region. (While not technically at the lunar South Pole, Chandrayaan-2's target site was by far the southernmost ever selected for a soft lunar landing. The next southernmost lander, China's Chang'e-4, sits at southern latitude of about 45.5° on the moon's far side.)
- 1st Indian expedition to attempt a soft landing on the lunar surface with home-grown technology.



Significance of the Moon's South Polar Region

- The lunar South Pole is especially interesting because of the lunar surface area here that remains in shadow are much larger than that at the North Pole.
- There is a possibility of the presence of water in permanently shadowed areas around it.
- In addition, South Pole region has craters that are cold traps and contain a fossil record of the early Solar System.
- The South Pole has been identified as a possible future location for a human outpost and the poles are the new frontiers for lunar exploration missions.

Source

- <https://nssdc.gsfc.nasa.gov/nmc/spacecraft/display.action?id=CHANDRYN2#targetText=Chandrayaan%20is%20an%20Indian,robotic%20rover%20on%20the%20surface>.
- <https://www.isro.gov.in/chandrayaan2-home-0>

PIB ANALYSIS

1) One stop solution to verify & Authenticate Voter Details

About Election Commission:

- Election Commission is an independent body established by the constitution of India which directly to ensure free and fair elections in the country.
- Article 324 of the constitution provides that the power of superintendence, direction and control of elections to parliament, state legislature, the office of president of India and office of vice-president of India shall be vested in the election commission.

About one stop solution

- The main aim of the programme is to improve the health of electoral rolls and to provide better electoral services to citizens and increase the level of communication between voters and the Commission.
- The programme was unveiled on the National Voters' Service Portal (<https://www.nvsp.in/>) and Voter Helpline App by the CEC Sunil Arora.
- The program has been launched at all Levels including at the State/UT HQs, Districts and Polling Stations.
- The voters can log on to NVSP portal or Voter Helpline App or Common Service Centres or any nearby voter facilitation centre to avail the following facilities:
 - 1.Verification and correction of existing data.
 - 2.Authentication of the data by the prescribed method.
 - 3.Providing and verifying details about family members.
 - 4.Updating information about voters in the family who have expired or permanently shifted.
 - 5.Providing GIS coordinates of their house for availing the services better.
 - 6.Giving feedback on polling stations.
- The one time authentication of details and sharing contact details would help electors to get update on online application status, status of EPIC, Election Day announcement, voter slip on their registered email and mobile number.

- Regular notification on modifications on Serial No. and details of Polling Station, Change in BLO/ ERO, all information related to Polling Station will also be shared with the Electors.

Why in News?

- Election Commission of India Launches a One Stop Solution to Verify & Authenticate Voter Details

Source:

- <https://pib.nic.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1583773>

2) Appointment of VCOAS: Vice Chief of the Army Staff

About Vice Chief of the Army Staff

- It is the second- highest Officer in the Indian Army.
- He is a PSO (Principal Staff Officer) at the Army Headquarters in the national capital.
- The VCOAS is always a 3- Star Officer in the rank of Lieutenant General.

Appointment of VCOAS:

- Lt Gen MM Naravane assumed charge as the Vice Chief of the Army Staff (VCOAS).
- He succeeds Lt Gen Devraj Anbu. He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy and the Indian Military Academy.
- He was commissioned into the 7th Battalion, The Sikh Light Infantry Regiment in Jun 1980.

Why in News?

- Lt Gen MM Naravane assumes appointment of VCOAS.

Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=1583769>

3) Joint Naval Annual Quality Conclave

About JNAQC:

- A group of eminent leaders and apex level leadership of large organisations will be delivering keynote addresses during the JNAQC.
- It is envisaged that the Conclave will provide a vibrant environment for stimulating discussions on all aspects pertaining to Transformation of QA Paradigm and will benefit all stakeholders

by enabling cross-fertilisation of ideas and best practices from diverse fields.

- The Joint naval Annual Quality Conclave with the theme of “Transformation of QA Paradigm: Opportunities and Challenges.
- It will be hosted by the Naval Quality Assurance Establishments under the aegis of Director General Quality Assurance, Ministry of Defence in Visakhapatnam.

Why in News?

- Joint Naval Annual Quality Conclave (JNAQC) to be held in Visakhapatnam.

Source:

- <https://www.pib.nic.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1583858>

4) Executive Board of A-WEB

About A-WEB (Association of World Election Bodies):

- It is the first global Organization of elected management bodies and total membership consist of 97 Organization from 94 Countries.
- It was founded to support the democracies achieve good governance and socio-economic improvements that are sustained under political stability.
- It also plans and implements country programs to improve electoral democracy and works in collaboration with other international bodies to spread democratic election systems.

India and AWEB

- The ECI was closely associated with AWEB in the formation process. It was also one of the founding members of AWEB.
- From 2017, India was Vice-Chair of AWEB and India continues to promote AWEB’s mission wholeheartedly to promote partnership among Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) around the world.

Why in News?

- ECI is scheduled to host the 4th General Assembly of the Association of World Election Bodies at Bengaluru. Over 50 countries across the world will join the meeting.

Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=192963>

5) India takes over COP Presidency from China

About Conference of parties (COP)

- The COP is the supreme decision-making body of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- All States that are Parties to the Convention are represented at the COP, at which they review the implementation of the Convention and any other legal instruments that the COP adopts and make decisions necessary to promote the effective implementation of the Convention, including institutional and administrative arrangements.

India and COP

- The objective of the COP 14 is to discuss on various issues of land such as sustainable land management, reversing land degradation, mitigating drought, halting desertification, addressing sand and dust storms, linkages with gender, tenure, etc.
- India being the global host for COP 14 will take over the COP Presidency from China for the next two years till 2021.
- Indian Union Environment Minister expressed India’s resounding commitment to finding a Long-term solution to minimize the impact of desertification and land degradation.

About UNCCD

- United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) was adopted in Paris on June 1994 and ratified by 196 countries & European Union.
- This convention can be called as “Mother convention” of the other two Rio Conventions that emerged as a major outcome of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit viz. United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

Why in News?

- India takes over COP Presidency from China for next two years. UNCCD COP14 Event begins on a high-note.

Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=192958>
- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1583852>

6) Exercise Yudh Abhyas

About Yudh Abhyas:

- It is a Joint military exercise between INDO-US defences Cooperation.
- It is one of the largest joint running military training and defence cooperation between India- US.
- It was conducted at Joint Base Lewis McChord, Washington and this will be the 15th edition of the joint exercise hosted alternately between the two countries.
- Armed forces of both countries to train in an integrated manner at Battalion level with joint planning.
- It is an ideal platform to learn from each other's expertise and experience of planning and execution of action.

Why in News?

- Recently India- US conducted its Joint military exercise. Largest military and defence cooperation.

Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=192978>

7) Contribution of 22mn USD to GFATM

About GFATM:

- The Global Fund to Fight against AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, it is an international financing and partnership organization that aims to attract, leverage and invest additional resources to end the epidemics of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and Malaria.
- It mainly support attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The idea of creating Global Funds (GFATM) was discussed at the G8 summit, Japan, 2000.
- The real commitment began at the African Union summit in April, 2001. Later on, they made a special session with United National General Assembly to discuss about GFATM.
- Finally, it endorsed by the G8 at their summit in Italy. Now as an International Organization, the global fund mobilizes and invests more than US\$4 Billion a year to support programs run by local experts in more than 100 Countries.

Why in News?

- India announces contribution of 22 mn USD to GFATM for 6th replenishment cycle.

Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=192975>

8) NERAMAC Marketing complex in Guwahati

About NERAMAC:

- It is North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation Limited Marketing complex in Guwahati.
- NERAMAC Limited was incorporated in the year 1982, it is GOI Enterprises and administrative control of the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region.
- It is marketing organization in the field of Agri-Horti sector of the North-eastern region. It mainly support farmers from the field and up to the markets.
- It has its own infrastructure developed with all facilities, will not only attain its sustainability but it also strengthens for the larger operation which will directly or indirectly benefit the farmers of the region.
- It is continuously making all efforts for the development of the farmers of the Northeastern region and double their income by the end of 2022.

Why in News?

- MoS (DoNER) Dr Jitendra Singh to laid foundation stone of NERAMAC Marketing complex in Guwahati recently.

Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=192967>

9) Mount Leo Pargyil:

About Mount Leo Pargyil:

- It is the 3rd highest peak of Himachal Pradesh (6773m).It lies in the Zanskar Range.



Why in News?

- An Indian Army team successfully summited Mount Leo Pargyil (6773M) recently after an extremely challenging

climb in harsh weather, hoisting the National Flag atop Mt Leo Pargyil.

Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=192979>

10) AH-64E Apache Attack Helicopter:

About AH-64E:

- Apache attack helicopters are being purchased to replace the Mi-35 fleet. It is a significant step towards modernization of Indian Air Force helicopter fleet.
- IAF has signed a contract with 'The Boeing Company' and US Government for 22 Apache Attack Helicopters. The first eight helicopters have been delivered on schedule and the last batch of helicopters is to be delivered by March 2020.
- The helicopter is capable of delivering a variety of weapons which include air to ground Hellfire missiles, 70 mm Hydra rockets and air to air Stinger missiles.
- Apache also carries one 30 mm chain gun with 1200 rounds as part of area weapon subsystem.
- It carries fire control radar, which has a 360° coverage and nose-mounted sensor suite for target acquisition and night vision systems.

Why in News?

- The IAF formally inducted the AH-64E Apache attack Helicopter into its inventory at Air force Station Pathankot. It is purchased to replace the Mi-35 fleet.

Source:

- <https://www.pib.nic.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1583956>

11) 15th Finance Commission meet the Ministry of Food Processing Industry.

About the Meeting:

- Minister of Food Processing Industry presented the overview of Food Processing Industry to the commission and its contribution to the economy.
- The Commission felt that it was of immediate value to complete the 'Cold Chain Grid' project of the Ministry and Value Added Infrastructure, which is now under way.
- The Commission was also appreciative of the Ministry's project "Operation Greens"

which is an Integrated Value Chain development of Tomato, Onion and Potato (TOP) Crop and price stabilization measures.

About "Gold Chain Grid"

- The National Cold Chain Grid in the country will connect food producing hubs to cold storage and processing industries. It will further aid to double farmers' income and create huge job opportunities.
- India is one of the largest food producers in the world and the second largest producer of fruits and vegetables yet only 2.2% of our fruits and vegetables are processed.
- As recommended by the Task Force on cold-chain a National Centre for Cold-chain Development (NCCD) has been established to promote and develop integrated cold-chain in India for perishable agriculture and horticulture produce including perishable from allied sectors.
- The main objectives of the center are to recommend standards and protocols for cold-chain infrastructure, suggest guidelines for human resource development and to recommend appropriate policy frame-work for development of cold-chain.

About "Operation Greens"

- The programme was announced in the Union Budget 2018-19 with an outlay of Rs 500 crore to stabilize the supply and prices of tomato, onion and potato (TOP) crops. It was announced to promote farmer producers organisations, agri-logistics, processing facilities and professional management.
- The main aim of this project is to enhance sales realization of farmers growing these crops by strengthening production clusters and their FPOs, and linking/connecting them with the market.

Why in News?

- The Officials of 15th Finance Commission had a detailed with Union ministry of Food processing Industry to overview its contribution to the economy.
- They outlined the major policy initiatives.

Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=192998>

12) Science Explorer- Mobile Science Exhibition

About Mobile Science Exhibition:

- The Mobile Science Exhibition carries a number of interactive exhibits related to everyday science. It travels from school to school in rural areas and organizes exhibitions throughout the year.
- It is fully funded by the Ministry of Culture, GOI.

Aim:

- Creating and promoting a scientific awareness and a culture of science in Society.

About National Council of Science Museums:

- It is an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Culture, Govt. of India is primarily engaged in 'Communicating Science to Empower People' through its network of twenty-five Science Centres/Museums spread across India.
- It is the world's largest network of science centers and museums that function under a single administration.

Why in News?

- First ever Mobile Science Exhibition (SCIENCE EXPLORER) of NCSM in Leh for entire Ladakh Region.

Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=193010>

13) TSENTR 2019:

About TSENTR:

- It is a part of the annual series of large scale exercises that form part of the Russian Armed Forces' annual training cycle.
- This year it is conducted by the Central Military Commission of Russia.
- China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan will also take part in this event.
- It practice them in the fight against the scourge of international terrorism thereby ensuring military security in the strategic Central Asian region.
- TSENTR 2019- Consist of 2 Modules- 1st Module- It has counter-terror operations, repelling airstrikes, reconnaissance operations and defensive measures. 2nd Module- Offensive Operations.

Why in News?

- Exercise Tsentr is part of the annual series of large scale exercises that form part of the Russian Armed Forces annual training cycle.
- It will be conducted by Central Military Commission of Russia.

Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=193023>

14) INS Tarkash

About INS Tarkash:

- It is the 2nd Teg Class frigate which is constructed for the Indian Navy by Russia. It is also called as F50. It was commissioned into Western Naval Command in December 2012.



Why in News?

- INS Tarkash at Lagos, Nigeria. It has been scheduled to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Nigeria.

Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseSelfframePage.aspx?PRID=1584253>

15) 28th INDO- THAI CORPAT:

About Indo- Thai CORPAT:

- It is the 28th edition of India-Thailand Coordinated Patrol between the Indian Navy (IN) and Royal Thai Navy (RTN).It is conducted twice a year.
- Indian Ship kesari and Is Majesty's Thailand ship kraburi and along with Maritime Patrol Aircraft from both the Navies are participating.

Objectives :

- The Objectives of the Indo-Thai CORPAT are to ensure effective implementation of United Nations Conventions on Laws of the Sea (UNCLOS) which specify regulations regarding protection and conservation of natural resources,

conservation of marine environment, prevention and suppression of illegal, unregulated fishing activity/ drug trafficking/ piracy, exchange of information in prevention of smuggling, illegal immigration and conduct of Search and Rescue operations at sea.

- It further enhances strong bilateral ties and maritime cooperation between India and Thailand.

Why in News?

- The 28th edition of India-Thailand Coordinated Patrol between the Indian Navy (IN) and Royal Thai Navy (RTN) is being conducted from 5-15 September 19 at Bangkok.

Source:

- <https://pib.nic.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1584290>

16) Military medicine for SCO Member states:

About Shanghai Cooperation Organization:

- It is a permanent intergovernmental international organization and Eurasian political, economic and military organization aiming to maintain peace, security and stability in the region which was announced on June 15th 2001.
- Its founding members are China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
- It aims to strengthen mutual trust and neighborliness among the member states; promoting their effective cooperation in politics, trade, the economy, research, technology and culture, as well as in education, energy, transport, tourism,

environmental protection, and other areas.

- It makes joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region; and moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order.
- India becomes a member state of SCO in 2017.

About Military medicine for SCO Member States:

- It will be the first Military cooperation event hosted by India, under the SCO Defence Co-operation Plan 2019-2020, after it became a SCO Member State in 2017.
- It will be conducted by the Indian Armed forces under the Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS).
- It will take place between military medicine experts of SCO Member States on rendering of combat medical support, humanitarian assistance during disasters and measures to improve patient safety.
- Indian Armed forces will demonstrate the Rapid action medical team and organize a visit to referral Hospital.

Why in News?

- The first conference of Military Medicine for Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Member States will be held here on 12 – 13 September, 2019.
- The conference will be the first Military cooperation event hosted by India, under the SCO Defence Co-operation Plan 2019-2020.

Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=193067>

News in Depth

AIR NEWS

1) UNCCD COP14

About UNCCD

- Established in 1994, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management.
- The Convention addresses specifically the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, known as the drylands, where some of the most vulnerable ecosystems and peoples can be found.
- The Convention's 197 parties work together to improve the living conditions for people in drylands, to maintain and restore land and soil productivity, and to mitigate the effects of drought.
- The UNCCD is particularly committed to a bottom-up approach, encouraging the participation of local people in combating desertification and land degradation.

What is the Conference of the Parties (COP) mean?

- It is the supreme decision-making body. It reviews the implementation of the Convention. It meets on a biannual basis.



About COP 14

- Representatives of 196 countries will discuss key issues like land tenure, gender equity in land rights, dust and sand storms, and drought-led migration.
- COP 14 is critical because the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate

Change (IPCC), in its special report on climate change and land released last month, said the land surface temperature has increased by 1.53 degree Celsius since the pre-industrial period.

- The report called for addressing land degradation to help mitigate climate change because of large reserves of carbon in the soil. It is likely to be discussed at COP 14 and decisions may be taken on certain aspects of land management.
- India has promised to convert nearly 50 lakh hectare degraded land into "fertile land" in the next 10 years.

Why in News?

- The 14th Conference of Parties, COP14, to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification began in Greater Noida. The Conference will go on till 13th of this month. Over 3000 delegates from across the world will take part in COP14.

Source:

- <http://www.newsonair.com/News?title=UNCCD-COP14-in-India%3a-All-you-need-to-know&id=370946>

2) Growth of Eight Core Sectors

About the Eight Core Sectors

- In India, there are eight core sectors comprising of:
 1. Refinery products (28.04%)
 2. Electricity (19.85%)
 3. Steel (17.92%)
 4. Coal (10.33%)
 5. Crude oil (8.98%)
 6. Natural gas (6.88%)
 7. Cement (5.37%)
 8. Fertilisers (2.63%)
- These eight Core Industries comprise nearly 40.27% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP), which measures factory output.

- Index of Eight Core Industries is released by Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

Current Scenario

- The eight core industries of coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertilisers, steel, cement and electricity, which have a 40.27% weight in the Index of Industrial Production.
- The output of coal, crude oil, natural gas and refinery products recorded negative growth in July 2019.
- These eight-core sector industries had expanded by 7.3 per cent in July last year.
- During April-July, the eight sectors grew by 3 per cent compared to 5.9 per cent in the same period in the previous year.

Why in News?

- According to official data released by the government, Growth of eight core industries dropped to 2.1% in July mainly due to a contraction in coal, crude oil, natural gas and refinery products.

Source:

- <http://newsonair.nic.in/Main-News-Details.aspx?id=371012>

3) Nuakhai

About:

- It is an agricultural festival which is observed to welcome the new rice of the season. The word nua means new and khai means food.
- It is observed on the fifth day of the lunar fortnight of the month of Bhadrapada or Bhadra (August-September), the day after the Ganesh Chaturthi festival.

- It an important social festival of Western Odisha and adjoining areas of Simdega in Jharkhand.



Significance

- Nuakhai is understood to have nine colours and as a consequence nine sets of rituals are followed as a prelude to the actual day of celebration.
- People offer the newly harvested crop called Nabanha to their respective presiding deities. After offering the Nabanha, people relish different types of delicacies prepared from the newly harvested crop.
- The Nuakhai Juhar is a major ritual of the festival. It is an exchange of greetings with friends, relatives and well-wishers.

Why in News?

- Recently Western Odisha districts celebrated the agrarian festival 'Nuakhai'.

Source:

- <http://www.newsonair.com/News?title=Western-Odisha-districts-celebrating-Agrarian-festival-%26%2339%3bNuakhai%26%2339%3b&id=371045>

Hindu Editorial Analysis

1) What is the economics behind e-vehicles batteries

- GS PAPER III – environment and economy; non-conventional energy

Context –

- India is seeking a transition from conventional fuel vehicles to e-vehicles. The NITI Aayog, in May this year, proposed to ban the sale of all internal combustion engine (ICE) powered three-wheeler post March 2023.
- It also suggested that all new two-wheelers below 150cc sold after March 2025 should be electric. In consonance with these proposals, the Union Budget presented on July 5 announced tax incentives for early adopters.
- Even as the automobile industry had objected to the think-tank's proposal and called for a practical approach in framing electric vehicle-related policies, there has been the worry that EVs are still not financially viable because of various costs associated with their manufacture and use. Therefore it becomes necessary to analyse the feasibility of e-vehicles.

National Electric Mobility Mission Plan

- The National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP) 2020 is a National Mission document providing the vision and the roadmap for the faster adoption of electric vehicles and their manufacturing in the country.
- This plan has been designed to enhance national fuel security, to provide affordable and environmentally friendly transportation and to enable the Indian automotive industry to achieve global manufacturing leadership.
- As part of the NEMMP 2020, Department of Heavy Industry formulated a Scheme viz. Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India (FAME India) Scheme in the year 2015 to promote manufacturing of electric and hybrid vehicle technology and to ensure sustainable growth of the same.

Initiatives of the Government to promote electric mobility in the country:

- i. Under new GST regime, the rates of GST on Electric Vehicles has been kept in the

lower bracket of 12% (with no Cess) as against the 28% GST rate with Cess up to 22% for conventional vehicles.

- ii. Ministry of Power has allowed the sale of electricity as 'service' for charging of electric vehicles. This would provide a huge incentive to attract investments into charging infrastructure.
- iii. Ministry of Road Transport Highways issued notification regarding exemption of permit in case of battery operated vehicles.
- iv. Issue of Expression of Interest (EoI) for deployment of 5000 electric buses by State Transport Departments/Undertakings etc.

What is the difference between conventional and electric vehicles cost?

- The cost of the entire vehicle is four percentage points lower when compared to ICE vehicles.
- This is primarily due to fewer parts in the electric drivetrain. However, the battery pack takes up nearly half the cost of an electric vehicle.
- Therefore charging infrastructure development is a challenge as well as a policy point to develop e-vehicles in our country. It is a core point of FAME INDIA scheme.

How has the cost of the Li-ion battery pack cost evolved in the last decade?

- The price of these battery packs has consistently fallen over the past few years. This decrease is in part due to technological improvements, economies of scale and increased demand for lithium-ion batteries.

Where does India stand on EV adoption?

- In India, EV adoption will be driven by two-wheelers (, 79% of vehicles on Indian roads are two-wheelers
- Three-wheelers and cars that cost less than ₹10 lakh account for 4% and 12% of the vehicle population, respectively.
- Two-wheelers will also need smaller batteries when compared to cars and hence the overall affordable cost.
- India needs to manufacture Li-ion cells in-house.

- Now, cells are imported and “assembled” into batteries.
- Setting up a Li-ion manufacturing unit requires high capital expenditure.

Are EV vehicles completely environment friendly?

- In conventional ICEs, petrol or diesel fuels the engine. However, in EVs, batteries are not the fuel; electrons supplied by the battery fuel the vehicle.
- The battery is a device that stores electrons/energy which is sourced from electricity.
- Presently, most of India’s electricity is generated using conventional sources. In 2018-19, over 90% of India’s electricity was generated from conventional sources, including coal, and around 10% was produced from renewable sources such as solar, wind and biomass.
- While the rate of electricity generated from renewable sources has increased over the years, more needs to be done for their adoption.
- This is because the EV-charging infrastructure needs to be powered through renewable sources to make it truly sustainable.
- <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=191337>
- <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/technology/what-is-the-economics-behind-e-vehicle-batteries/article29311800.ece>

2. A plastic emergency

- GS Paper III – Environment

Context –

- On August 15, in his Independence Day address, the Prime Minister called for a movement to eliminate single-use plastic in India, beginning on Gandhi Jayanti (October 2).
- The government is reported to be working on a ban on certain plastic items of common use such as carry bags; cutlery and plates under the Environment (Protection) Act, and this may be announced on October 2, well ahead of the earlier deadline of 2022.
- Also the theme for the World Environment Day 2018 was “Beat Plastic Pollution”. Hence marine plastic patches

etc. are putting the pace of elimination of plastic in faster pedestal.

Where does India stand on plastic waste?

- Per capita consumption of plastic is projected to go up from 11 kg in 2014-15 to 20 kg by 2022 (Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry data); about 43% is single-use packaging with poor rates of recovery.
- An amendment to the PWM Rules in 2018, by which a six-month deadline was fixed for producers to arrange for recovery of waste in partnership with State Urban Development departments is not fully in force.
- The biggest Municipal Corporations shouldering a staggering waste burden has not fully implemented segregation of waste: collecting recyclable plastic, non-recyclable plastic and other waste separately for processing by material recovery facilities.
- Plastic is not marked with numerical symbols (such as 1 for PET, 4 for Low Density Polyethylene, 5 for Polypropylene and so on) to facilitate recycling using the correct industrial process.

Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016

- Rural areas have been brought in the ambit of this Responsibility for implementation of the rules is given to the Gram Panchayat.
- First time, responsibility of waste generators is being introduced. Individual and bulk generators like offices, commercial establishments, industries are to segregate the plastic waste at source, handover segregated waste, pay user fee as per bye-laws of the local bodies.
- First time, persons organising such events have been made responsible for the management of waste generated from public and community events.
- Uses of plastic sheet for packaging, wrapping the commodity except those plastic sheets’ thickness, which will impair the functionality of the product, are brought under the ambit of these rules. Provisions have been introduced to ensure their collection and channelization to authorised recycling facilities.
- The producers (i.e. persons engaged in manufacture, or import of carry bags,

multi-layered packaging and sheets or like and the persons using these for packaging or wrapping their products) and brand owners have been made responsible for collecting waste generated from their products.

- They have to approach local bodies for formulation of plan/system for the plastic waste management within the prescribed time frame.
- State Pollution Control Board (SPCBs) will not grant/renew registration of plastic bags, or multi-layered packaging unless the producer proposes the action plan endorsed by the concerned State Development Department.
- Producers to keep a record of their vendors to whom they have supplied raw materials for manufacturing carry bags, plastic sheets, and multi-layered packaging. This is to curb the manufacturing of these products in unorganised sector.
- The entry points of plastic bags/plastic sheets/multi-layered packaging in to commodity supply chain are primarily the retailers and street vendors. They have been assigned the responsibility of not to provide the commodities in plastic bags/plastic sheets/multi-layered packaging which do not conform to these rules. Otherwise, they will have to pay the fine.
- Plastic carry bag will be available only with shopkeepers/street vendors pre-registered with local bodies on payment of certain registration fee. The amount collected as registration fee by local bodies is to be used for waste management.
- Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has been mandated to formulate the guidelines for thermoset plastic (plastic difficult to recycle). In the earlier Rules, there was no specific provision for such type of plastic.
- Manufacturing and use of non-recyclable multi-layered plastic to be phased in two years.

Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules 2018

- The amended Rules lay down that the phasing out of Multilayered Plastic (MLP) is now applicable to MLP, which are "non-

recyclable, or non-energy recoverable, or with no alternate use."

- The amended Rules also prescribe a central registration system for the registration of the producer/importer/brand owner.
- The Rules also lay down that any mechanism for the registration should be automated and should take into account ease of doing business for producers, recyclers and manufacturers.
- The centralised registration system will be evolved by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) for the registration of the producer/importer/brand owner. While a national registry has been prescribed for producers with a presence in more than two states, a state-level registration has been prescribed for smaller producers/brand owners operating within one or two states.

Are alternatives such as compostable or biodegradable plastics viable?

- Although compostable, biodegradable or even edible plastics made from various materials such as bagasse (the residue after extracting juice from sugarcane), corn starch, and grain flour are promoted as alternatives, these currently have limitations of scale and cost.
- Some biodegradable packaging materials require specific microorganisms to be broken down, while compostable cups and plates made of polylactic acid, derived from biomass such as corn starch, require industrial composters.
- The articles made through a different process involving potato and corn starch have done better in normal conditions; Seaweed is also emerging as a choice to make edible containers.
- In India, though, in the absence of robust testing and certification to verify claims made by producers, spurious biodegradable and compostable plastics are entering the marketplace.

What can the packaging industry do?

- Industry should look at innovation and new materials in the days ahead, besides facilitating collection and recycling with the help of city administrations.
- Packaging is projected to grow into a \$72.6 billion industry in India by 2020 from about \$31 billion in 2015, with a

proportionate rise in waste volumes. The pressure on producers to streamline the collection, recycling and processing of all forms of plastic is bound to grow.

Way forward –

- A ban on single-use plastic items would have to therefore lay down a comprehensive mechanism to certify the materials marketed as alternatives, and the specific process required to biodegrade or compost them.
- A movement against plastic waste would have to prioritise the reduction of single-use plastic such as multi-layer packaging, bread bags, food wrap, and protective packaging.
- Other parts of the campaign must focus on tested biodegradable and compostable alternatives for plates, cutlery and cups, rigorous segregation of waste and scaled up recycling.
- Therefore each and every stakeholder is fully responsible and has to put up a coordinated effort towards elimination of plastic.

<https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/where-does-india-stand-on-plastic-waste/article29310525.ece>

- <http://vikaspedia.in/energy/environment/waste-management/plastic-waste-management-rules-2016>

3) Redesigning medical education

- GS Paper II – Governance and social issues; health sector; medical education

Context –

- With drastic changes in the medical administrative system like the National Medical commission bill; decline in quality of doctors, poor patient doctor ratio, corruption in the Medical council of India etc. there is a need for a closer scrutiny of the profession and regulate it.
- This article discusses the status of quality of medical education and reforms needed in it.

Key elements that define today's global health systems:

- Ageing populations
- Demand for quality
- Equity and dignity

- Transition from communicable to non-communicable diseases and from episodic illnesses to lifelong ailments
- Double burden of disease in some countries
- Disruptive advances in medical knowledge, IT, and biotechnology

Status of healthcare infrastructure in India:

Need for reforms:

- Medical education is the bedrock on which the needs of human resources for health', one of the major building blocks of any health system, are met. Today's medical education should be able to groom such professionals to face medicine of the 21st century.
- In addition to raising the standards of medical professionals, the system should innovate to meet the growing shortage of health professionals to serve ageing populations with lifestyle and lifetime ailments.
- The Medical Council of India has been mired in controversies, resulting in deterioration in the quality of education.
- Also, its policies and strategies were delinked from the rapid changes happening in health systems within India and globally. By monopolising control over every aspect of medical education, it bred the culture of deep-rooted corruption.
- However, if MCI splits its functions into four well-defined areas, and stipulates fixed and rotating terms to key people, it could enable the creation of a more responsive system.

Reforms proposed:

- Revisit the existing guidelines for setting up medical schools and according permission for the right number of seats.
- Extending teaching privileges to practising physicians and allowing e-learning tools will address the shortage of quality teachers across the system. Together, these reforms could double the existing medical seats without compromising on the quality of teaching.
- *The Lancet* report, 'Health Professionals for a new century: transforming health education to strengthen health systems in an interdependent world' (2010) outlines

key recommendations to transform health professional education.

- Periodic re-certification based on continuing learning systems may become essential to keep up with the fast pace of change.
- Virtual learning tools eliminate the need for didactic classrooms.
- Dynamic curricula designed around specific health systems will become more relevant than the systems designed for the classical hospital-based care.
- Since health professionals work in teams, inter-professional combined learning methods are being introduced. Even the concept of the teaching hospital is changing from a single, large hospital to a network of hospitals and community health centres.
- They medical professionals are required to: be proficient in handling disruptive technologies, understand the economics of healthcare, have the skills to work in and handle large and diverse teams, be ethical, demonstrate empathy, and be abreast of rapid developments in medicine.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/redesigning-medical-education/article29315879.ece> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5144115/>

4) A new ethics for a sustainable planet

- GS paper III - Environmental conservation

Context -

- Brazil's Amazon forests are ablaze with dozens of fires, most of them set intentionally by loggers and others seeking greater access to forest land. At this scale, they are paving the way for a global climate catastrophe.
- While European leaders and civil society in many places are organising protests to oppose policies that encourage the fires, the Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has stated that they are an internal matter and that they were actually started by the very non-governmental organisations who are now shouting "fire".
- The American President Donald Trump has withdrawn from the Paris Climate

Agreement stating that it is against the national interests of the U.S. across the Atlantic.

The grave situation:

- Many cities in Europe and elsewhere have seen high temperatures never before experienced.
- Heat waves have also accelerated melting of glaciers in Greenland at a rate that was not anticipated by scientific models until much later this century.
- The burning of the world's largest forest reserves, the withdrawal of the world's leading polluter from a major international treaty and the U.K.'s isolationist policies may appear to be the triumph of nationalist ideology.
- But these actions have consequences that far transcend national boundaries and impact all creatures that share life on the planet.

Causes:

- Energy and transport are mainly responsible for the accumulation of greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere

Changes in land use patterns -

- Deforestation, industrial agricultural systems and desertification are major drivers of climate change. Agriculture, forestry and other land use activities accounted for a little less than a quarter (23%) of the total net anthropogenic emissions of GHGs between 2007-2016.
- Soils have become depleted with heavy use of chemicals, farms have few or no friendly insects
- Monoculture has led to a reduction in the use of indigenous crop varieties with useful characteristics
- Groundwater is depleted and polluted farm runoffs are contributing to contaminated water bodies while destroying biodiversity.
- The system that no longer supports agricultural households and the stresses has led to farmer suicides.
- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently brought out a special report on Climate Change and Land that covers desertification, land degradation, sustainable land management, food security and

greenhouse gas fluxes in terrestrial ecosystems.

- Very wide in its scope, the report makes it clear that unless land is managed in a sustainable manner, the diminishing chance that humanity will survive climate change will become smaller still.

India's scenario: vulnerability and resilience

- HSBC's 2018 assessment of India being the country the most vulnerable to climate change is of great significance.
- HSBC's index and other such measures relating to the climate risk consider the exposure or sensitivity of countries to climate impacts on the one side, and their ability to cope on the other.
- A number of Indian States have experienced extreme heat waves in the past three years, and the nation's capital recently recorded a temperature of 48°C, its hottest day in 21 years. India's exposure to climate hazards is heightened by the location of its vast coastline in the eye of the storm, across the Indian Ocean, Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea.
- It also has a high population density located in harm's way. For instance, Kerala, which experienced intense floods and landslides in 2018 and 2019, is among the States with the highest density.
- Increasing temperatures and changing seasonal rainfall patterns are aggravating droughts and hurting agriculture across the country. Extreme storms like the one that hit Odisha this year and the floods that swept Chennai in 2015 are the new normal.

Sustainable approach:

- More sustainable agricultural practices like reducing chemical input drastically, and taking the practice of food production closer to natural methods of agroecology, as these would reduce emissions and enhance resilience to warming.

The report calls for:

1. avoiding conversion of grassland to cropland
2. bringing in equitable management of water in agriculture
3. crop diversification

4. agroforestry and investment in local and indigenous seed varieties that can withstand higher temperatures

5. Practices that increase soil carbon and reduce salinization.

- It also necessitates eating locally grown food and cutting meat consumption
- End deforestation, while conserving mangroves, peat land and other wetlands.
- Land use policy should incorporate better access to markets for small and marginal farmers
- empower women farmers
- Expand agricultural services and strengthen land tenure systems.
- build resilience in the sectors of agriculture, fisheries, manufacturing, energy, transport, health, and education.
- The priority for spending at the national and State levels for disaster management needs to rise.
- Adequate resources must also be allocated for implementing climate action plans that most States have now prepared.
- Indeed, India should be alarmed at ecological destruction even in faraway places like Amazon.
- The nation must reinforce its infrastructure and adapt its agriculture and industry. Equally, it also needs to replace urgently its fossil fuels with renewable energy.
- Sustainable land management can reduce multiple stressors on ecosystems and societies. It will also help societies adapt better to warmer climates and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

Ethical perspective:

- We need a new planetary ethics that supports alternative systems for the future, for a sustainable earth.
- It is one that cultivates the growth of ecological sensibilities, supports pluralism, enhances the quality of life, shifts values away from consumerism and creates new identities and cultures that transcend conventional boundaries.
- Civil society movements that have transcended borders, for example, La Via Campesina, The Transition Network, and Eco regionalism. More recently, Fridays for Future and Fossil Fuel Divestment are part of such evolving sensibilities. As a

country that is most at risk for climate damage, it should lead in pressing the global community to take sweeping climate action.

- In the Great Transition Initiative, Paul Raskin has said that seeing our place as part of the web of life, instead of at its centre, requires a Copernican shift in world views.
- Just as Copernicus changed the perception of the earth from the centre of the universe to being one among many planets, so too will our sensibilities have to shift. If we fail to see our place as being part of the planet, we may well go down with it.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-new-ethics-for-a-sustainable-planet/article29316564.ece>
- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/indias-climate-score-high-on-vulnerability-low-on-resilience/article29334520.ece>

5) Putting the skids under border trade

- GS Paper II – international relations; bilateral trade

Context –

- The series of events regarding India-Pakistan relations has put the border economy in despair. Let us analyse the issue

What happened till now?

Indian side:

- February 2019, in the wake of the Pulwama attack, India decided to withdraw the Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status to Pakistan; subsequently, it imposed 200% customs duty on all Pakistani goods coming into India. After the Balakot airstrikes, again in February, India and Pakistan closed their airspace. In April, India suspended trade across the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir citing misuse of the trade route by Pakistan-based elements.

Pakistan side:

- Post the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill, Pakistan cut off diplomatic and economic ties with India — expelling the Indian envoy, partially shutting airspace and suspending bilateral trade.

Plunging trade

- Escalating tensions between the two neighbours naturally led to the announcement of retaliatory unilateral decisions, one after the other.
- Like in the past, the impact has trickled down to trade relations between both the countries; this time it is much more severe.
- In 2018-19, bilateral trade between India and Pakistan was valued at \$2.5 billion — India's exports to Pakistan accounted for \$2.06 billion and India's imports from Pakistan were at \$495 million. India's decision *vis-à-vis* withdrawal of MFN status and imposition of 200% duty has hurt Pakistan's exports to India, falling from an average of \$45 million per month in 2018 to \$2.5 million per month in the last four months.

Impact on trade:

1. Unlike national economies, border economies owe their existence to cross-border economic opportunities. These economies generally experience a sudden boom-bust cycle on account of political changes, trade bans, price and exchange rate and tax fluctuations.
2. For eg. Inception of India-Bangladesh border *haats*, the costs and benefits are mutual to the border economies on both sides; much more in cases such as Amritsar where major economic activity is largely dependent on border trade with Pakistan.
3. Traders and their staff members, customs house agents (CHAs), freight forwarders, labour force, truck operators, *dhaba* owners, fuel stations, and other service providers are getting out of business.
4. Other dimensions of the problem - For example, gypsum, imported from Pakistan, were being used in India as well as in Nepal for the cement plants there. To avoid empty backhauling on the return journey, trucks carrying these consignments brought back specific products such as yarn from mills in Uttar Pradesh to Punjab. In the absence of gypsum trade, the freight rate of trucks from Uttar Pradesh to Punjab, as per the ground reports, has increased from ₹3 to ₹7 per kg, with a single trip absorbing the cost of the entire journey.

5. Therefore Balancing out mechanisms of international trade, are experiencing fluctuations now because of the trade disruptions.

6.6. The share of indirect trade which is estimated to be more than double the direct trade between India and Pakistan. This is increasing because the trade is being routed through intermediaries like UAE.

Way forward:

- The border trade and bilateral trade are very vital aspect of neighbourhood relations and hence very important for national security. Therefore border trade becomes a national interest. In modern economies and globalization, it is not advisable to engage in complete trade wars and it will in turn affect the local economy.
- Measures like Customs clearance, Transit management, border haats, neighbourhood exchange, local resources joint management etc would be useful in developing mechanisms for efficient trade management and maintain friendly relations with neighbours.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/putting-the-skids-under-border-trade/article29325485.ece>

6) Putting accident victims at the centre of vehicles act (The Hindu - 5th sept)

- GS Paper II – Governance, society

Context –

- The motor vehicle amendment act, 2019 has been passed recently which has is being strictly across states. India is one of the most accident-prone countries in the world, accounting for nearly 1, 50,000 deaths — 10% of all motor vehicles-related fatalities worldwide. Hence the recent move brings all the aspects of the social issue into scrutiny.

Analysis

- The debate often revolves around how to minimise road accidents by incorporating deterrents into laws and ignores the interests of the victims. The discourse concerning the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act 2019 has only followed this trend, as is evidenced by the

disproportionate press coverage given to the enhanced penalties to be levied on offenders. Hence there is lack of victim-centricity in the discourse. The National Crime Records Bureau does not collate data pertaining to the socio-economic and demographic profile of victims of traffic accidents. Hence the focus should fall on the victim centricity.

The motor vehicles amendment act, 2019

- The Bill seeks to amend the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 to provide for road safety.
- The Act provides for grant of licenses and permits related to motor vehicles, standards for motor vehicles, and penalties for violation of these provisions.
- Compensation for road accident victims: The central government will develop a scheme for cashless treatment of road accident victims during the golden hour.
- The Bill defines golden hour as the time period of up to one hour following a traumatic injury, during which the likelihood of preventing death through prompt medical care is the highest.
- The central government may also make a scheme for providing interim relief to claimants seeking compensation under third party insurance.
- The Bill increases the minimum compensation for hit and run cases as follows: (i) in case of death, from Rs 25,000 to two lakh rupees, and (ii) in case of grievous injury, from Rs 12,500 to Rs 50,000.

Compulsory insurance:

- The Bill requires the central government to constitute a Motor Vehicle Accident Fund, to provide compulsory insurance cover to all road users in India. It will be utilised for: (i) treatment of persons injured in road accidents as per the golden hour scheme, (ii) compensation to representatives of a person who died in a hit and run accident, (iii) Compensation to a person grievously hurt in a hit and run accident, and (iv) Compensation to any other persons as prescribed by the central government.
- This Fund will be credited through: (i) payment of a nature notified by the central government, (ii) a grant or loan

made by the central government, (iii) balance of the Solatium Fund (existing funds under the Act to provide compensation for hit and run accidents), or (iv) any other source as prescribed the central government.

Good Samaritans:

- The Bill defines a Good Samaritan as a person who renders emergency medical or non-medical assistance to a victim at the scene of an accident. The assistance must have been (i) in good faith, (ii) voluntary, and (iii) without the expectation of any reward. Such a person will not be liable for any civil or criminal action for any injury to or death of an accident victim, caused due to their negligence in providing assistance to the victim.

Recall of vehicles:

- The Bill allows the central government to order for recall of motor vehicles if a defect in the vehicle may cause damage to the environment, or the driver, or other road users. The manufacturer of the recalled vehicle will be required to: (i) reimburse the buyers for the full cost of the vehicle, or (ii) replace the defective vehicle with another vehicle with similar or better specifications.

National Transportation Policy:

- The central government may develop a National Transportation Policy, in consultation with state governments. The Policy will: (i) establish a planning framework for road transport, (ii) develop a framework for grant of permits, and (iii) specify priorities for the transport system, among other things.

Road Safety Board:

- The Bill provides for a National Road Safety Board, to be created by the central government through a notification.
- The Board will advise the central and state governments on all aspects of road safety and traffic management including: (i) standards of motor vehicles, (ii) registration and licensing of vehicles, (iii) standards for road safety, and (iv) promotion of new vehicle technology.

Offences and penalties:

- The Bill increases penalties for several offences under the Act. For example, the maximum penalty for driving under the

influence of alcohol or drugs has been increased from Rs 2,000 to Rs 10,000.

- If a vehicle manufacturer fails to comply with motor vehicle standards, the penalty will be a fine of up to Rs 100 crore, or imprisonment of up to one year, or both.
- If a contractor fails to comply with road design standards, the penalty will be a fine of up to one lakh rupees. The central government may increase fines mentioned under the Act every year by up to 10%.

Taxi aggregators:

- The Bill defines aggregators as digital intermediaries or market places which can be used by passengers to connect with a driver for transportation purposes (taxi services). These aggregators will be issued licenses by state Further, they must comply with the Information Technology Act, 2000.

Challenges:

1. A closer attention needs to be paid to the formula used to calculate the quantum of compensation.
2. In the case of *Arun Kumar Agarwal & Anr v. National Insurance Co. Ltd & Ors* (2010), the Supreme Court commented that: "The time has come for the Parliament to have a rethink on properly assessing homemakers' and householders' work and suitably amending the provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act... for giving compensation when the victims are women and homemakers." The amended Act, however, does not account for such nuances.
3. Vehicle users who don't give passage to emergency ambulance vehicles are liable to be punished with fines, such punitive measures are likely to remain ineffective in the absence of an effective implementation mechanism.
4. Other factors that lead to a poor response time, including lack of road infrastructure, also need to be taken into account.
5. Procedural delays on the part of tribunals in claims settlement.
6. An absence of in-built safeguards in the compensation mechanism allows for the money to be frittered away by unscrupulous relatives, touts and agents, especially in cases where the victim or his nearest kin are poor and illiterate.

Way forward

- These new amendments are on the legislative side and bringing in deterrence will bring further discipline on roads. This will be the aspect which will bring behaviour modification in the public. But it is necessary for the government to notify an institutional framework which encourages advocacy for victims and facilitates access to the various services. Hence a complete holistic approach to the problem of road safety will be addressed.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/oped/putting-accident-victims-at-the-centre-of-vehicles-law/article29334610.ece>
- <https://www.prsindia.org/billtrack/motor-vehicles-amendment-bill-2019>

8. A weak chase - On controlling hepatitis B

- GS Paper II – society; health

Context -

- Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Thailand became the first four countries in the World Health Organization's Southeast Asia region to have successfully controlled hepatitis B.
- Despite the introduction of hepatitis B vaccine in the Universal Immunisation Programme in 2002 and scaling-up nationwide in 2011, about one million people in India become chronically infected with the virus every year.
- According to the Health Ministry, as on February 2019, an estimated 40 million people in India were infected. Hence it becomes necessary to fasten the pace of eliminating hepatitis B.

What Is Hepatitis B?

- Hepatitis B is the most common serious liver infection in the world. It is caused by the hepatitis B virus that attacks and injures the liver.
- Two billion people (or 1 in 3) have been infected and more than 292 million people are living with a chronic hepatitis B infection. Each year up to 1 million people die from hepatitis B despite the fact that it is preventable and treatable.

- The hepatitis B virus (HBV) is a small DNA virus that belongs to the "Hepadnaviridae" family.
- It is transmitted through blood and infected bodily fluids. It can be passed to others through direct contact with blood, unprotected sex, use of illegal drugs, unsterilized or contaminated needles, and from an infected woman to her newborn during pregnancy or childbirth.
- Hepatitis B infection at a young age turns chronic, causing over 1,00,000 premature deaths annually from liver cirrhosis or liver cancer.
- The word "hepatitis" actually means "inflammation" of the liver. Thus, "hepatitis B" refers to inflammation of the liver caused by the hepatitis B virus.

The present scenario

- A study published in 2013 found lower coverage of hepatitis B vaccine in eight of the 10 districts surveyed. An increase with the introduction of a pentavalent vaccine on a pilot basis in Kerala and Tamil Nadu in December 2011 and national roll-out in 2014-2015.
- According to the WHO, the coverage of hepatitis B third dose had reached 86% in 2015.
- However, despite the high vaccination coverage, disease prevalence in children aged less than five years has not dropped below 1%. One of the reasons for this is the sub-optimal coverage of birth dose in all infants within 24 hours of birth.

Coverage of vaccination for new-born

- Hepatitis B birth dose, given in the first 24 hours, helps prevent vertical transmission from mother to child.
- The compulsion to increase birth dose to cut vertical transmission arises from two important reasons — about 70-90% newborns infected this way become chronic carriers of hepatitis B, and about 20-30% carriers in India are due to vertical transmission.
- The Health Ministry approved the birth dose in 2008, its coverage remained low — 45% in 2015 and 60% in 2016 — according to a 2019 Health Ministry report.
- In the case of institutional delivery, the birth dose vaccine coverage is low — 76.36% in 2017. Incidentally, institutional

delivery accounts for about 80% of all deliveries in the country. Hence this is the major factor for prevailing hepatitis B, in spite of it being part of universal immunization programme.

- One of the reasons for the low coverage is the fear of wastage of vaccine when a 10-dose vial is used.

Way forward

- Hence increase in public awareness and strengthening the institution will be needed. The rural AMN workers and

midwives etc. have to be educated and equipped with the protocols to provide the needed vaccination.

- Thereby reducing the incidence of hepatitis B in our country and eliminating it.
- <https://www.hepb.org/what-is-hepatitis-b/what-is-hepb/>
- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/a-weak-chase-on-controlling-hepatitis-b/article29345193.ece>

RSTV Big Picture

1) South Asian speaker summit

- GS Paper II - international relations, neighbourhood first policy

Context –

- The 4th edition of the South Asian Speakers' Summit was held in the Maldives.
- The Summit was attended by delegates from India, Pakistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Afghanistan.
- Indian delegation was constituted by the Speaker of Lok Sabha, the Vice Chairman of Rajya Sabha and the Secretary General of both the houses.
- Male Declaration was adopted which included a commitment to work collectively on promoting equality at work, nutrition, food security and overcoming challenges and utilizing opportunities to strengthen the regional agenda for delivering on Paris agreement.

Significance of the South Asian Speaker Summit –

- Inter-Parliamentary Forums are necessary to discuss issues of common concern and exchange ideas.
- The South-Asian speaker summit concerns itself mainly with Sustainable development goals.
- There is an emphasis on discussing the Sustainable development goals in each Parliament session. The Office of Speaker recommended the same to all state legislatures.
- The Summit can also help in estimating how the Legislature, as a deliberative and accountable institution, is working on the issue of SDG's.

Focus Areas of Male declaration-

- In 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved before 2030.
- The summit itself is an implementation of SDG 17 which insists on the global partnerships which are needed to achieve the goals.
- The Male declaration views South Asia as one region with common issues such as poverty, sustainable livelihoods, clean air and Water.

- India has had tangible progress in a number of SDGs over the last few years and the target of some goals has been effectively preponed to 2022, i.e 75th year of Independent India.
- The Inter Parliamentary Union (IPU) was formed in 1889 and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) in 1911. India participates in summits organised by both IPU and CPA. South-Asian Summit is an offshoot of IPU.
- The declaration focused on commitment to collective efforts towards common issues such as equality at work, food and nutritional security, etc.
- The Idea of the Male Declaration is for the South Asian Legislatures to speak and act in a unified voice over issues of common concern, irrespective of their political factors in each nation.

How can Forums help the participating Parliaments -

- Legislatures can gain expertise on scrutinising such common issues rigorously.
- Parliamentary Committee on Labour in India had scrutinised existing labour laws and led to its amendment by giving equal status with cine workers, to those who are working for TV and web series.
- In a parliamentary democracy, the executive is required to take the consent of the legislature in deciding socioeconomic matters. Such forums help the legislature to bring the executive accountable to the decisions concerning these topics.
- Further, Legislatures of Nations should consider the International ramifications of the Legislations and Initiatives taken up. Inter-parliamentary Forums play a major role in this aspect.
- The Declaration is also significant in that it helps the Parliaments assess the Fiscal Priority assigned to each topic by the executive assessing it through the lens of SDG's.

Bilateral Issue disruptions from Pakistan -

- The Vice Chairman of Rajya Sabha rebutted the attempt point by point questioning the right of Pakistan to raise concern about Kashmir when they themselves had led a genocide in eastern Pakistan (Bangladesh) in 1971.
- Pakistan has attempted this malpractice in the earlier SAARC summits. That is one reason behind the irregularity in the holding of SAARC summits.
- India had rebutted the attempt by Pakistan to raise the Kashmir issue.

Do these Bilateral Issues hinder the Progress of Such Forums -

- The agenda of the forum was to discuss common challenges such as poverty and SDGs. They have specified agenda that the participants need to stick to.
- Appropriate discussions at appropriate forums are the cornerstone of any Parliamentary democracy. The Forums are Platforms for adopting Best practices and work for smooth communication channels.
- It is, therefore, not a good practice to bring political issues at such forums intended to discuss serious socio economic issues.

Conclusion-

- The Participation in such Fora results in better Legislation and Deliberation for the executive and legislature. The Participation enriches them with deeper awareness of the practices in the region, raising the quality of the Deliberations.

2) PM'S EASTERN ECONOMIC FORUM

- GS Paper II - international relations

Context -

- Speaking at the Eastern Economic Forum at Vladivostok, Prime Minister Modi unveiled the "Act Far East" policy. India also extended 1 billion dollar Line of Credit to Russia's Far East.
- The Prime Minister also reiterated that India will walk shoulder-to-shoulder with Russia, its time-tested friend, in its development of the resource-rich Far East region.
- Act Far East Policy comes in succession to 'Act East Policy' which was developed soon after his government came into power for the first time in 2014.

- The mandate of Eastern Economic Forum is aimed at developing the business and investment opportunities in Russia's Far East Region.

East Economic Forum -

- The Eastern Economic Forum was established by Decree of the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin in 2015. In accordance with the Decree, the Eastern Economic Forum takes place each year in Vladivostok.
- Every year, the Eastern Economic Forum serves as a platform for the discussion of key issues in the world economy, regional integration, and the development of new industrial and technological sectors, as well as of the global challenges facing Russia and other nations of Asia-Pacific Region.

The Far East-

- The Far East is the easternmost part of Russia. The macro-region borders two oceans, the Pacific and the Arctic, and five countries (China, Japan, Mongolia, the United States and North Korea).
- The Far East is rich in natural resources like diamonds, borax materials, 50 gold, tungsten, and fish and seafood. About 1/3 of all coal reserves and hydro-engineering resources of the country are here. Forests of the region comprise about 30% of the total forest area of Russia.

Significance to India -

- The Visit goes far beyond Economic diplomacy, as it has multidimensional long term benefits to it. The 1 billion dollar Line of Credit extended is a symbol of India's willingness to invest in new regions, like the Far East.
- It will, however, depend on the Ease of Implementation and Follow-up to really boost India's Trade narrative. Ease of doing Business is particularly critical, as there is much scope for efficiency.
- Two possible Areas of increased investment are Defence and Energy.
- There are various dimensions like Economic, Geo- Strategic and Political Scenarios.
- Geo-Strategic Dimension- Both India and Japan want to contain China, by teaming with Russia and the US. India and Russia are for a multipolar world.

- From Russia's perspective, there is great mistrust of the Chinese in the region, because of the inflow of Chinese, pig rearing, soybean farms in the far-east regions. 1969 Soviet China war ramifications were felt there. The 2nd largest city Khabarovsk is 30 km away from the Chinese border.
- On the Political Front- Russia's Categorical statement of supporting India in the Revocation of Article 370, saying it as India's sovereign right and an internal matter is a huge plus. It provided Extra ammunition to India as Russia is also one of the members of the Permanent 5 in the UN Security Council.

On Economic Front-

- Indo-Russian Trade is \$10 bn. It is mostly one dimensional, consisting of sectors of defence and energy. The effort is to diversify to timber, mining, healthcare, skill development, IT.
- Russia will also be training 4 astronauts for Gaganyaan. Vladivostok Chennai road opening up.
- 27% of gas reserves and 17% of oil reserves in Russia are in the Far East Regions. Hence there is immense scope. In terms of agriculture and diamond cutting Far East is important.
- Russian President suggested the Exchanges be in terms on Rubles and Rupees instead of dollars. The credit line extended by India also has a sense of soft touch.
- It is also a strong Statement from India as it helps in opening up other Business avenues across the world.

Success of Act East Policy-

- Act East policy enables India to strike a balance with China between confrontational approach and making peace relations.
- Cumulative effect of the policy is our relations with ASEAN and the Increased Involvement in the Developmental projects in the region.
- Strategic Benefits are hard to quantify. However, the bilateral ties with Japan and the individual countries in the South-East are also the consequence of Act East Policy.

- Element of trust and complementarity with respect to India, for example – India-Japan Africa Corridor, BBIN etc.

Conclusion-

- The Investment and Developmental Initiatives can also be merged with Make in India Programs. Proper Follow-up and Implementation are key here, as there is enough political will at the highest level for both the countries.