

# OFFICERS' Pulse

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## Coverage.

The Hindu  
PIB  
Yojana  
Rajya Sabha TV  
All India Radio

## 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 TIP

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# News @ a glance

## POLITY

### 1) We won't dilute article 371, Shah assures north eastern states

- GS Paper II - constitution and polity; scheduled areas; rights of indigenous people

#### Why in news?

- In the 68th plenary session of North Eastern Council (NEC), Union Home Minister has assured North Eastern States that the union government will not touch or dilute the provisions of Article 371 which grants special provisions to the region of North East as well as other states.
- The Union Home Minister who is also the chairman of NEC highlighted the difference between Article 370 and 371. He said that Article 370 was clearly temporary in nature while Article 371 is about special provisions in the northeast.
- 371A. Special provision with respect to the State of Nagaland
- 371B. Special provision with respect to the State of Assam
- 371C. Special provision with respect to the State of Manipur
- 371D. Special provisions with respect to the State of Andhra Pradesh.
- 371E. Establishment of Central University in Andhra Pradesh
- 371F. Special provisions with respect to the State of Sikkim
- 371G. Special provision with respect to the State of Mizoram.
- 371H. Special provision with respect to the State of Arunachal Pradesh.
- 371I. Special provision with respect to the State of Goa.
- 372. Continuance in force of existing laws and their adaptation.

#### Why?

- Concerns were raised regarding the special status of article 371 after the

abrogation of article 370 and about the status of Assam after NRC.

#### North eastern council

- The North Eastern Council is the nodal agency for the economic and social development of the North Eastern Region which consists of the eight States of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura.
- The North Eastern Council was constituted in 1971 by an Act of Parliament. The constitution of the Council has marked the beginning of a new chapter of concerted and planned endeavour for the rapid development of the Region.
- <https://www.constitution.org/cons/india/p21.html>

### 2) Centre asks states to identify accident-prone spots

- GS Paper II - Governance
- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has issued new guidelines to State governments for identifying accident black spots on national highways and rectifying them and has urged them to give "special attention in a strictly time-bound manner" to the issue.
- **Black spot** - A black spot is defined as a stretch of not more than 500 metres in length where five accidents have taken place or where 10 fatalities have happened in the last three years. The government had prepared a ₹14,000-crore plan to identify black spots. The Ministry has reached out to the World Bank for funds after approval from the Ministry of Finance.

#### The guidelines -

1. details the process for inspecting the spots
2. framing a proposal and obtaining sanctions for rectifying them

3. Suggest a timeline for submitting an inspection report and completing the civil works.

4. Based on site inspection, preliminary survey etc. the type of interventions required to be identified and accordingly the action for taking corrective measures i.e. short-term measures and long-term measures may be initiated at the regional office level.

▪ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/centre-asks-states-to-identify-accident-prone-spots/article29369119.ece>

### 3) Study sheds more light on American killings by Sentinels

▪ GS Paper II – polity; scheduled tribes and PVTG; social issues – malnutrition

▪ Acute malnutrition among Saharias, a particularly vulnerable tribal group, due to crushing poverty delayed breastfeeding, premature pregnancies and seasonal migrations is continuing to take away lives.

▪ As a result, every second child under five in the Shivpuri and Sheopur districts of central India is underweight. Even the country, in the 2018 Global Hunger Index, ranked an abysmal 103 out of 119 countries, consistently showing a downward trend on wasting and undernourishment parameters.

▪ **Particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTG)** (earlier: Primitive tribal group) is a government of India classification created with the purpose of enabling improvement in the conditions of certain communities with particularly low development indices.

▪ The **Dhebar Commission** (1960-1961). Stated that within Scheduled Tribes there existed an inequality in the rate of development.

▪ 75 tribal groups have been categorized by Ministry of Home Affairs as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG).

▪ PVTGs reside in 18 States and UT of A&N Islands.

▪ The criteria followed for determination of PVTGs are as under:

1. A pre-agriculture level of technology;

2. A stagnant or declining population;

3. Extremely low literacy; and

4. A subsistence level of economy.

▪ **Saharia:** The Saharia people of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan are the largest among the PVTG with population more than 4 lakhs. The residential place of Saharias is known as "Sahrama". The head of the family is honoured with a title of "Patel". At the society level, the leader is known as "Pardhan". Saharia tribe is highly influenced by the Rajasthani culture and it can be clearly seen in their dresses. They follow Hindu religious practices and speak a dialect influenced by Hadoti. They are generally engaged in agricultural work.

▪ Last year, the Sentinelese tribes in Andaman and Nicobar Islands had allegedly killed a foreign National who had entered into North Sentinel Island. In this regard, a recent publication by the Anthropological Survey of India (ASI) throws light on this incident.

▪ The Sentinelese tribe is one of the most isolated tribes in the world. The Sentinelese is assumed to be direct descendants of the Negrito origin, inhabiting the North Sentinel Island in Andaman and Nicobar Islands for almost 60,000 years.

▪ They speak an incomprehensible language which even the Onges, another aboriginal tribe can decipher or understand. The community is assumed to be hunter-gatherers.

▪ Since the 1960s, there have been a handful of efforts to reach out to the tribe but all have largely failed.

▪ They have repeatedly, aggressively made it clear that they want to be isolated. In addition to Sentinelese, Andamans and Nicobar are home to 6 aboriginal or primitive indigenous tribes of India namely Onges, Jarawa, Andamanese, Shompen and Nicobarse.

▪ North Sentinel Island is a reserved area under the Andaman and Nicobar Island (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956. As per this regulation, entry to reserved areas is prohibited and can only be allowed on a pass/permission of the Deputy – Commissioner of Andaman & Nicobar.

▪ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/amid-acute-poverty->

[saharia-children-battle-malnutrition/article29369050.ece](https://www.saharia-children-battle-malnutrition/article29369050.ece)

#### 4) UNHRC asks India to end lockdown in J&K

- GS Paper II – polity and governance; social issues; human rights

##### Context –

- The UN Human Rights Council urged India to end the lockdown in Kashmir and restore basic communications services.
- It also raised concerns over the exclusion of lakhs of people from the National Register of Citizens, and highlighted the issue of civil rights.

##### UNHRC

- The Human Rights Council is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe and for addressing situations of human rights violations and make recommendations on them.
- It has the ability to discuss all thematic human rights issues and situations that require its attention throughout the year. It meets at the UN Office at Geneva.
- The Council is made up of 47 United Nations Member States which are elected by the UN General Assembly. The Human Rights Council replaced the former United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

##### Committees

- The Council adopted its "Institution-building package" to guide its work and set up its procedures and mechanisms.
- Universal Periodic Review mechanism which serves to assess the human rights situations in all United Nations Member States
- Advisory Committee which serves as the Council's "think tank" providing it with expertise and advice on thematic human rights issues
- Complaint Procedure which allows individuals and organizations to bring human rights violations to the attention of the Council.
- The Human Rights Council also works with the UN Special Procedures established by the former Commission on Human Rights and now assumed by the Council.

- These are made up of special rapporteurs, special representatives, independent experts and working groups that monitor, examine, advice and publicly report on thematic issues or human rights situations in specific countries.

- <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HR/Pages/AboutCouncil.aspx>
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/un-human-rights-chief-asks-india-pakistan-to-respect-and-protect-rights-of-kashmiris/article29375135.ece>

#### 5) Archbishop visits Jallianwala Bagh

- GS Paper I – history, Art and culture
- The Archbishop of Canterbury, Reverend Justin Welby, on Tuesday visited the Jallianwala Bagh in Punjab's Amritsar said it was deeply humbling and provoked feelings of profound shame for him to visit the site of a horrific massacre over a hundred years ago.
- He said "I have no status to apologise on behalf of the U.K., its government or its history. But I am personally very sorry for this terrible atrocity".

##### Jallianwala Bagh Massacre,

- Jallianwala also spelled Jallianwala, also called Massacre of Amritsar, incident on April 13, 1919, in which British troops fired on a large crowd of unarmed Indians in an open space known as the Jallianwala Bagh in Amritsar in the Punjab region (now in Punjab state) of India, killing several hundred people and wounding many hundreds more.
- It marked a turning point in India's modern history, in that it left a permanent scar on Indo-British relations and was the prelude to Mohandas (Mahatma) Gandhi's full commitment to the cause of Indian nationalism and independence from Britain.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/archbishop-of-canterbury-visits-jallianwala-bagh/article29384524.ece>

#### 6) NCST recommends 'tribal area' status for Ladakh

- GS Paper II – polity and governance; scheduled areas; tribal rights

##### Context –

- The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes has recommended newly created

Union Territory of Ladakh to be declared as a “tribal area” under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

#### **The need for this status –**

- The NCST feels this will help “democratic devolution of powers, preserve and promote distinct culture of the region, protect agrarian rights including rights on land and enhance transfer of funds for speedy development of the region.”
- The NCST’s recommendation comes against the backdrop of growing demand from a predominantly tribal population and political leaders of Ladakh for according “tribal area” status to the region.

#### **Sixth Schedule**

- It provides for Administration of Tribal Areas in the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
- It provides for creation of Autonomous Districts and Autonomous Regions by the Governor. If there are different Scheduled Tribes in an autonomous district, the Governor may, by public notification, divide the area or areas inhabited by them into autonomous regions.
- Governors of four states are empowered to declare some tribal dominated districts / areas of these states as autonomous districts and autonomous regions by executive order.
- The Governor also has power to include any other area, exclude any area, increase, decrease, diminish these areas, unite two districts / regions, and alter the names and boundaries of these autonomous districts and regions.
- It provides for constitution of District Councils and Regional Councils.
- There shall be a District Council for each autonomous district consisting of not more than thirty members, of whom not more than four persons shall be nominated by the Governor and the rest shall be elected on the basis of adult suffrage. The elected members of District Council shall hold office for a term of 5 years.
- There shall be a separate Regional Council for each area constituted an autonomous region.

#### **NCST**

- The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) was established by

amending Article 338 and inserting a new Article 338A in the Constitution through the Constitution (89th Amendment) Act, 2003.

- By this amendment, the erstwhile National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes was replaced by two separate Commissions namely-
  - (i) The National Commission for Scheduled Castes (NCSC), and
  - (ii) The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) w.e.f. 19 February, 2004.
- It functions to safeguard the interests and protect their tribal rights.
- <https://ncst.nic.in/content/introduction>

### **8) Two anti-lynching Bills being examined by Centre**

- GS Paper II – polity and governance

#### **Context –**

- States of West Bengal and Rajasthan have passed a Bill against lynching which is being currently being examined by Ministry of Home Affairs. After the Bills are approved by Home Ministry, they will become law in their respective states.

#### **The two Bills currently examined by Home Ministry:**

- The Rajasthan Protection from Lynching Bill, 2019 - It provides for life imprisonment and a fine from Rs. 1 lakh up to Rs. 5 lakh to those convicted in cases of mob lynching leading to the victim’s death.
- The West Bengal (Prevention of Lynching) Bill, 2019 – It proposes a jail term from 3 years to life imprisonment for those involved in assaulting and injuring a person and also defines terms such as “lynching” and “mob”. The State also proposed the West Bengal Lynching Compensation Scheme.

#### **State laws are examined by the centre with 3 criteria:**

- Repugnancy with Central laws,
- Deviation from national or Central policy and
- Legal and Constitutional validity
- Based on the comments provided by Central Government, the President either rejects or gives assent to a Bill.
- Article 254 - Inconsistency between laws made by Parliament and laws made by the Legislatures of States.

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/two-anti-lynching-bills-being-examined-by-centre/article29394667.ece>

## 9) NATGRID wants to link social media accounts to central database (The Hindu - 13<sup>th</sup> sept)

- GS Paper III- internal security; cyber security; social media; intelligence agencies
- The ambitious National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) project wants to link social media accounts to the huge database of records related to immigration entry and exit, banking and telephone details among others

### NATGRID

- The project started in 2009 with a budget of ₹2,800 crore, is an online database for collating scattered pieces of information and putting them on one platform.
- At least 10 central agencies like Intelligence Bureau (IB), Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) and others will have access to the data on a secured platform.
- NATGRID links intelligence and investigation agencies. The 10 user agencies will be linked independently with certain databases that would be procured from 21 providing organisations and include telecom, tax records, bank, immigration, etc. to enable the generation of intelligence inputs.
- EVA - Entity Extraction, Visualization and Analytics (EVA) system that would collect and analyse information available from various data sources."

### Concerns -

- The proposal has received resistance from the intelligence agencies, whose officials fear that linking the social media accounts to sensitive government data could expose the system to "trojan attacks." it would impinge on their territory and possibly result in leaks on the leads they were working on to other agencies.

### Types of cyber attack

- **PHISHING** - Phishing is a form of social engineering where a criminal hacker tries to trick the user into clicking a malicious link or downloading an infected

attachment or divulging sensitive or confidential information.

- **RANSOMWARE**- is a type of malicious software designed to deny access to files until, or threaten to publish the victim's data unless, a ransom is paid (although there is no guarantee that access will be restored, or that the criminal hacker will destroy the data).
- A **DDoS** (distributed denial-of-service) attack attempts to disrupt normal web traffic and take a site offline by overwhelming a system, server or network with more access requests than it can handle.
- A computer **virus** is a type of malicious code or program written to alter the way a computer operates. Much like a flu virus, it is designed to spread from one computer to another (but without the user's knowledge)

### Way forward -

- The cyber security ecosystem of our country has to be strengthened in order to effectively implement such huge data projects. Data privacy laws and cyber security tools with the enforcement agencies and skill development needs to be taken care of.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/natgrid-wants-to-link-social-media-accounts-to-central-database/article29402252.ece>
- <https://www.itgovernance.co.uk/blog/different-types-of-cyber-attacks>

## 10) 312 Sikh foreigners removed from post-militancy 'adverse list'

- GS Paper II - polity and governance; citizenship
- At least 312 Indian-origin Sikhs living in foreign countries have been removed from a Ministry of Home Affairs "adverse list", enabling them to apply for Indian visa and visit the country.

### What is adverse list?

- In 1980s, when Sikh militancy was at its peak, many members of the community in India and abroad were influenced by anti-India propaganda. Some Sikhs fled India to escape the authorities, acquired foreign nationality and took asylum outside.

- They were placed in the adverse list till 2016, making them ineligible to avail visa services to visit India.
- The list prepared by the intelligence agencies was available with all Indian missions and it was a major roadblock for persons seeking visa even for their family members who were not on the list.

#### **Implications –**

- All Indian missions have been advised to grant appropriate visa to all categories of asylees and derivative asylees (family members) whose names do not figure in the Central Adverse List, in line with the procedure followed for other categories of applicants of that nationality.
- This review is a continuous and dynamic process and part of a regular exercise. Such a review will afford an opportunity to such Sikh foreign nationals to visit India, meet their family members and reconnect to their roots.
- What is OCI?
- The Constitution of India does not allow holding Indian citizenship and Citizenship of a foreign country simultaneously. Based on the recommendation of the High Level committee on Indian Diaspora, the Government of India decided to register Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) of certain category as has been specified in the Section 7A of the Citizenship Act, 1955 as Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) Cardholder.

#### **The following categories of persons (except Pakistan and Bangladesh) are eligible to apply under OCI scheme:**

- Who is a citizen of another country, but was a citizen of India at the time of, or at

any time after, the commencement of the constitution; or

- Who is a citizen of another country, but was eligible to become a citizen of India at the time of the commencement of the constitution; or
- Who is a citizen of another country, but belonged to a territory that became part of India after the 15th day of August, 1947; or
- Who is a child or a grand-child or a great grandchild of such a citizen; or
- (b) A person, who is minor child of a person mentioned in clause (a); or(c) A person, who is a minor child, and whose both parents are citizens of India or one of the parents is a citizen of India; or(d) Spouse of foreign origin of a citizen of India or spouse of foreign origin of an Overseas Citizen of India Cardholder registered under section 7A, Citizenship Act 1955 and whose marriage has been registered and subsisted for a continuous period of not less than two years immediately preceding the presentation of the application under this section: Provided that no person, who is or had been a citizen of Pakistan, Bangladesh or such other country as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, specify, shall be eligible for the registration as Overseas Citizen of India Cardholder.
- <https://boi.gov.in/content/overseas-citizen-india-oci-cardholder>
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/312-indian-origin-sikhs-removed-from-adverse-list/article29406884.ece>

# ENVIRONMENT

## 1) Land degradation major contributor to climate change

### Why in news?

- Land degradation is a major contributor to climate change as degraded land loses soil carbon and emits greenhouse gases, according to a report introduced at the 14th Conference of Parties on land desertification being hosted by India.

### Highlights of the report:

- Emissions from agriculture, forestry and land use sector make about one-third of the total global emissions.
- Land degradation is the driver of climate change. Degraded land loses soil carbon and emits greenhouse gases due to deforestation and loss of soil carbon.
- Lower carbon density in re-growing forests compared to carbon stocks before deforestation results in net emissions from land use change.
- Forest management that reduces carbon stocks of forest land also leads to emissions, but global estimates of these emissions are uncertain.
- Cropland soils have lost 20-60 per cent of their organic carbon content prior to cultivation, and soils under conventional agriculture continue to be a source of greenhouse gases.
- Land degradation adversely affects people's livelihoods and occurs over a quarter of the earth's ice-free land area.
- It said that the majority of the 1.3 to 3.2 billion people affected by land desertification are living in poverty in developing countries.
- The member countries of the UNCCD have adopted to achieve the land degradation neutrality target by 2030 to mitigate climate change.

### Land degradation neutrality;

- Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) is a state whereby the amount and quality of land resources, necessary to support the ecosystem functions and enhance food security, remain stable or increase within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems.

- 122 countries are working to achieve the LDN target by 2030.

## 2) India to raise target for restoring degraded land: PM Modi

### Why in news?

- PM Modi announces target revised from 21 million hectares to 26 million hectares by 2030.

### About the announcement:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi has raised by 10% the amount of degraded land India has agreed to rehabilitate by 2030.
- This target would be achieved with an emphasis on "degraded agricultural, forest and other wastelands by adopting a landscape restoration approach.
- India faces a severe problem of land degradation, or soil becoming unfit for cultivation. About 29% or about 96.4 million hectares are considered degraded.
- Purpose of the target rise:
- This would also address water scarcity, enhance water recharge in forests, slow down water run-off and retain soil moisture.
- Background:
- India became part of the "Bonn Challenge", a global effort to bring 150 million hectares of the world's deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030.
- At the United Nations Conference of the Parties (COP) 2015 in Paris, India also joined the voluntary Bonn Challenge and pledged to bring into restoration 13 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by 2020, and an additional 8 million hectares by 2030.
- India's pledge was one of the largest in Asia.

## Land in trouble

The decline in the productive capacity of land due to climatic factors and human intervention is land degradation. A look at important conclusions from the Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India, 2016, which was the latest survey done on the subject

**94.53** million hectares (mha)  
Area of India undergoing the process of land degradation, as of 2003-05 – 28.76% of the total geographic area

**96.4** million hectares (mha)  
Area of India undergoing the process of land degradation, as of 2011-13 – 29.32% of the total geographic area

**26** million hectares (mha)

The number of hectares of degraded land which India now aims to rehabilitate by 2030, up from the previous commitment of 21 mn hectares



- <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/india-to-raise-target-for-restoring-degraded-land-pm-modi/article29374484.ece>
- <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/land-degradation-big-contributor-to-climate-change-report/article29341816.ece>

## 2) UNCCD

### About UNCCD:

- 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 new UNCCD 2018-2030 Strategic Framework is the most comprehensive global commitment to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) in order to restore the productivity of vast expanses of degraded land, improve the livelihoods of more than 1.3 billion people, and reduce the impacts of drought on vulnerable populations to build
- A future that avoids, minimizes, and reverses desertification/land degradation and mitigates the effects of drought in affected areas at all levels ... to achieve a land degradation-neutral world consistent with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development
- 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.
- The UNCCD secretariat facilitates cooperation between developed and developing countries, particularly around knowledge and technology transfer for sustainable land management.
- As the dynamics of land, climate and biodiversity are intimately connected, the UNCCD collaborates closely with the other two Rio Conventions; the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to meet these complex challenges with an integrated approach and the best possible use of natural resources.
- <https://www.unccd.int/convention/about-convention>

## 3) Basel Ban Amendment

### Why in news?

- The 1995 Basel Ban Amendment, a global waste dumping prohibition, has become an international law after Croatia ratified it on September 6, 2019.
- Croatia became the 97th country to ratify the ban, which was adopted by the parties

to the Basel Convention in 1995, to protect human health and the environment against the adverse effects of hazardous wastes, according to Basel Action Network (BAN).

#### **About the Ban amendment:**

- BAN is a United States-based charity organisation and is one among the organisations and countries, which created the Basel Ban Amendment — hailed as a landmark agreement for global environmental justice.
- The Ban Amendment prohibits all export of hazardous wastes, including electronic wastes and obsolete ships from 29 wealthiest countries of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to non-OECD countries.
- The Ban Amendment had been stalled for all these years due to uncertainty over how to interpret the Convention.
- It will become a new Article in the Convention and will enter into force in the 97 countries after 90 days — on December 5.

#### **Aim:**

- To protect human health and the environment against the adverse effects of hazardous wastes.

#### **Basel Convention:**

- The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal was adopted on 22 March 1989 by the Conference of Plenipotentiaries in Basel, Switzerland.
- The Convention entered into force in 1992.

#### **Objective**

- The overarching objective of the Basel Convention is to protect human health and the environment against the adverse effects of hazardous wastes.
- Its scope of application covers a wide range of wastes defined as “hazardous wastes” based on their origin and/or composition and their characteristics, as well as two types of wastes defined as “other wastes” - household waste and incinerator ash.

#### **Aims:**

- The provisions of the Convention center around the following principal aims:
- the reduction of hazardous waste generation and the promotion of environmentally sound management of

hazardous wastes, wherever the place of disposal;

- the restriction of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes except where it is perceived to be in accordance with the principles of environmentally sound management; and
- A regulatory system applying to cases where transboundary movements are permissible.
- <http://www.basel.int/TheConvention/Overview/tabid/1271/Default.aspx>
- <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/waste/basel-ban-amendment-becomes-law-66651>

## **4)Pangang Tso Lake**

### **Why in news?**

- A scuffle broke out between Indian and Chinese soldiers on the bank of the Pangong Tso Lake in eastern Ladakh on Wednesday but the matter has been swiftly resolved through talks between the two militaries.

### **About Pangong Tso Lake:**

- In the Ladakhi language, Pangong means extensive concavity, and Tso is lake in Tibetan.
- Pangong Tso is a long narrow, deep, endorheic (landlocked) lake situated at a height of more than 14,000ft in the Ladakh Himalayas.
- It is not a part of the Indus river basin area and geographically a separate landlocked river basin.
- The lake is in the process of being identified under the Ramsar Convention as a wetland of international importance. This will be the first trans-boundary wetland in South Asia under the convention.
- The brackish water lake freezes over in winter, and becomes ideal for ice skating and polo.

### **Strategic significance:**

- The LAC cuts through the lake, but India and China do not agree on its exact location.
- A 45 km-long western portion of the lake is in Indian control, while the rest is under China’s control. Most of the clashes between the two armies occur in the disputed portion of the lake.

- The lake lies in the path of the Chushul approach, one of the main approaches that China can use for an offensive into Indian-held territory.
- Indian assessments show that a major Chinese offensive, if it comes, will flow across both the north and south of the lake.
- <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/indian-chinese-militaries-swiftly-resolve-pangong-tso-standoff-through-talks/articleshow/71101970.cm>

## 5) Drought tool box

### Why in news?

- The ongoing 14th Conference of Parties (COP14) to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) unveiled the Drought-forecasting toolbox.

### Need for drought tool box:

- The economic impact of drought has increased almost three-fold in the last few years. If the cost of drought globally was \$29 billion a year between 2005-2015, it is now is more than \$80 billion a year.
- A 2 degree Celsius increase in global temperatures will put an additional 441 million people at the risk of facing drought globally.
- Droughts have caused loss of food grains that can feed as many as 81 million people every day.
- "Drought is a major obstacle to achieving sustainable development goal-15 (SDG-15).
- The need for a better tool to forecast droughts and minimise their socio-economic impact was felt long ago and two years ago many countries suggested that the UNCCD come up with a template.

### Uses of drought toolbox:

- It is a web page that provides the stakeholders easy access to case studies and other resources to support action on drought preparedness with the aim of boosting the resilience of people and ecosystems to drought.
- The 'drought toolbox' will help the countries in framing or fine-tuning their respective national drought policies in due course based on monitoring, forecast, and early warning.
- The drought toolbox, which uses 30 parameters, including soil moisture, rainfall data and temperature data of the

present and past, can accurately evaluate the vulnerability of different geographic regions to drought.

- This tool box will not only warn of an impending drought, but also suggest means to mitigate the adverse impact of acute water scarcity.
- Drought toolbox' provides tools and solutions organised in three key pillars: monitoring and early warning systems, vulnerability and risk assessment, and risk mitigation.
- A range of methods, resources, technical instruments, and guidance documents are labelled as 'tools' or 'solutions' in this toolbox.
- "Many of them are very useful to guide the management and the connection between the environment, water resources, society, and drought," said the UNCCD on the web page of the 'drought toolbox'.
- "Drought monitoring and early warning systems typically aim to track, assess and deliver relevant information concerning climatic, hydrological and water supply conditions and trends.
- [https://www.google.com/amp/s/m.timesofindia.com/india/cop14-drought-toolbox-launched-to-reduce-risk-in-vulnerable-countries/amp\\_articleshow/71085302.cms](https://www.google.com/amp/s/m.timesofindia.com/india/cop14-drought-toolbox-launched-to-reduce-risk-in-vulnerable-countries/amp_articleshow/71085302.cms)
- <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/agri-business/drought-forecasting-toolbox-unveiled-at-unccd-event/article29393829.ece/amp/>

## 6) Snow Leopard

### Why in news?

- Conservation of snow leopards and preservation of people's cultural values can prevent land degradation of the Himalayan ecosystem, said experts at the ongoing 14th Conference of Parties of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

### How does it happen?

- The snow leopard is the apex predator in the region. Saving it will mean that we will need to save the prey base of herbivores too and to save the prey base will mean preserving the grassland that they feed on.

This will automatically lead to the prevention of land degradation.

#### **About Snow Leopard:**

- IUCN status: Listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.
- Listed on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species (CITES).

#### **Threats:**

1. Habitat loss and fragmentation
2. Climate change
3. Human wildlife conflict
4. Illegal wildlife trade

#### **Distribution:**

- Snow leopards are sparsely distributed across 12 countries in central Asia, from southern Russia down to the Tibetan plateau, including Mongolia, China, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Nepal.
- They're usually at home in high, rugged mountain landscapes at heights of over 3,000 metres – and climate change may shrink their available habitat.

#### **Why snow leopards are important?**

- Snow leopards are top predators in their environment, and their favorite prey is mountain sheep and goats.
- Without the snow leopard there may be too many of these herbivores, which would overgraze the sparse alpine plants on the mountains, leaving no food for other wildlife.
- The same landscape also provides food and other important resources for the many people who live there – including medicine and wood for shelter, heat and fuel.
- So by protecting the snow leopard, we're benefitting the whole natural environment in these areas and the people who rely on it.
- <https://www.wwf.org.uk/wildlife/snow-leopards>
- <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.downtoearth.org.in/news/climate-change/amp/snow-leopards-cultural-codes-can-help-prevent-land-degradation-in-himalayas-experts-66655>

## **7) Single use plastic ban**

#### **Why in news?**

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that single use plastics in India will be banned from October 2, 2019.

#### **What is single-use plastic?**

- Single-use plastics, often also referred to as disposable plastics, are commonly used for packaging and include items intended to be used only once before they are thrown away or recycled.
- These include, among other items, grocery bags, food packaging, bottles, straws, containers, cups and cutlery.
- Plastic packaging is mostly single-use, especially in business-to-consumer applications, and a majority of it is discarded the same year it is produced. Such plastics are problematic because they are not biodegradable.

#### **Why is it difficult to ban single-use plastics?**

- India has Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2018.
- One of its key obligations is to have industries that make products that ultimately employ plastic (and generate plastic waste) collect a fixed percentage every year.
- The State Pollution Control Boards as well municipalities have the responsibility to ensure that plastic waste is collected and sent to recycling units.
- Compared to other countries such as the U.S. and China, India has very low per capita generation of plastic waste. However, in real terms, this is quite substantial and nearly 10,000 tonnes of plastic waste is left uncollected every day.
- Studies by organisations like The Energy Resources Institute (TERI) on landfills have found that 10.96% of waste was only plastic and of these, non-recyclable plastics accounted for 9.6%.
- The disparity is because certain kinds of plastic, such as PET bottles are remunerative for rag pickers as they are in demand at recycling facilities.
- <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thehindu.com/news/national/is-india-likely-to-ban-single-use-plastics-soon/article29418809.ece/amp/>

## **8) Species extinct due to desertification**

#### **Why in news?**

- 3-4 animal species have gone extinct in India due to desertification, researchers

warned at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP 14).

**Extinct species:**

- Indian Cheetah



- Pink-headed duck



- Great Indian Bustard.



**Causes of desertification:**

- Desertification may be caused due to insecticides, pesticides, conversion to agricultural land, industries and chemicals, indiscriminate development.

**Impact of desertification:**

- Desertification not only impacts animals but the entire biodiversity, which includes microscopic animals to human beings.
- The entire food chain is affected due to this desertification.
- More than 30 percent of India's land area has been degraded through deforestation, over-cultivation, soil erosion and depletion of wetlands.
- <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.indiatoday.in/amp/education-today/gk-current-affairs/story/3-animal-species-in-india-extinct-due-to-desertification-researchers-at-unccd-meet-1597652-2019-09-10>

# ECONOMY

## 1) Centre sets up a panel to draw up a National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP)

### Why in News?

- The government on Saturday said it had constituted a high-level task force to identify infrastructure projects for Rs.100 lakh-crore worth investment to be made by 2024-25 as India aims to become a \$5-trillion economy.

### National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP)

- The task force, headed by the Economic Affairs Secretary, will draw up a 'national infrastructure pipeline' of Rs.100 lakh-crore.
- This would include a list of Greenfield and brownfield projects costing above Rs 100 crore each.
- These will include social and economic infrastructure projects.

### About the task force

- The task force will comprise secretaries from different Ministries, senior officials and the NITI Aayog CEO.
- It will identify technically feasible and financially/economically viable infrastructure projects that can be initiated in 2019-20.
- It has been asked to list the projects that can be included in the pipeline for each of the remaining five years between FY21 and FY25.
- The challenge is to step up annual infrastructure investment so that lack of infrastructure does not become a binding constraint on the growth of the Indian economy.

### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/business/pipeline-set-up-to-identify-infra-projects-for-100-lakh-crore-investment/article29363471.ece>

## 2) Registration of steel and iron imports made mandatory

### Why in news?

- The government has removed steel and iron imports items from the 'free' category and has made it mandatory for importers

to apply in advance for a registration of their import.

- The new system will come into effect from November 1, 2019.

### Reasons for the move

- The announcement comes in a bid to clamp down on the dumping of iron and steel imports, and also the over-and under-invoicing of these products.
- It comes at a time when India has been at the receiving end of large amounts of steel dumping.
- The decision aims at promoting Make in India of these products and increases the availability of quality products.
- The Indian steel and aluminium industries have raised concerns that the trade war between the U.S. and China was leading to the dumping of steel and aluminium products in India that were originally meant for the other two countries.
- Indian imports of steel and iron had contracted 31% in 2016-17, the financial year before U.S. President Donald Trump imposed higher import duties on steel.
- India's steel and iron imports reversed the contraction of the previous year, and grew 2.8% in 2017-18.
- The full effect of the U.S.' higher tariffs and China's retaliatory tariffs was clearly visible by 2018-19, during which India's imports of steel and iron grew more than 14%.

### Dumping

- It is a term used in the context of international trade. It's when a country exports a product at a price that is lower in the foreign importing market than the price in the exporter's domestic market. Because dumping typically involves substantial export volumes of a product, it often endangers the financial viability of the product's manufacturers or producers in the importing nation.

### News in Details

- According to a notification issued by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT), the import of 284 item lines under the steel and iron category has been re-

designated from 'free' to 'free subject to compulsory registration under 'Steel Import Monitoring System'.

- This Steel Import Monitoring System (SIMS) will require the importer to submit advance information on an online portal for the import of the items mentioned in the notification and obtain an automatic registration number.
- The importer can apply for registration not earlier than 60 days before and not later than 15 days before the expected date of arrival of the import, and the registration number will remain valid for 75 days.
- This import-export data will bring transparency and will help solve the issue of over-invoicing and under-invoicing.
- It will also protect the domestic industry and help in taking anti-dumping actions.

#### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/registration-of-steel-and-iron-imports-a-must/article29376996.ece/amp/>
- <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/d/dumping.asp>

### 3) Tax authorities to file special appeal for small cases

#### Why in news?

- The Income Tax Department has issued a circular saying it would file special appeals in cases falling below the threshold, if it feels there is evidence of deliberate tax avoidance.

#### Background

- The Income Tax Department periodically reviews the monetary limits for the filing of its appeals before the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal (ITAT), the High Courts, and the Supreme Court.
- In its last review (August, 2019) the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) had sharply raised the threshold for filing appeals in tax disputes to reduce tax litigation and to give relief to taxpayers.
- The move was expected to improve ease of doing business for companies struggling to cope with a cooling down economy.

#### The aftermath

- The Income Tax Department's decision to increase the monetary limit for the cases

below which it could not appeal the court's decision has somewhat backfired.

- It is now detecting a lot of organised tax evasions, specifically designed to fall below that threshold.
- Taking cognisance of this, the Department has issued a circular saying it would file special appeals in cases falling below the threshold, if it feels there is evidence of deliberate tax avoidance.

#### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/business/tax-authorities-to-file-special-appeal-even-for-small-cases/article29394722.ece>

### 4) NRI-FPI investments merger on 'long route'

#### Context

- Various capital market initiatives were announced in the Union Budget in July, including a higher public holding in all listed companies and merger of the investment routes for foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) and non-resident Indians (NRIs).
- However, implementation of the proposals is likely to take a long time due to the large number of stakeholders involved and also possible concerns that could be raised by the various regulators involved in executing the government decision.

#### Concerns about the proposal

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) had already expressed its reservations on raising the minimum public holding to 35% – as proposed in the Budget – from the current stipulated 25%.
- It has now emerged that the proposed merger of the NRI-FPI route would also be a long-drawn process since various modalities need to be worked out between the capital markets regulator and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), along with the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA).
- Experts believe that while the merger of the NRI and FPI investment route would make the regulatory framework more investor-friendly and “provide NRIs with seamless access to Indian equities,” it may require the RBI to part with the Portfolio Investment Scheme (PIS) regulations and hand them over to the markets regulator

(SEBI), which could delay the implementation.

- No regulator likes to part with its jurisdiction or subjects that are under its purview. Thus it needs to be worked out between RBI and SEBI.

#### **About Minimum Public Shareholding norms**

- The Minimum Public Shareholding rule requires all listed companies in India to ensure that at least 25 per cent of their equity shares are held by non-promoters.
- In 2010, SEBI amended the Securities Contracts Regulation Rules to insist on this 25 per cent public float for private sector companies.
- PSUs were allowed a 10 per cent MPS, but have been asked to comply with a 25 per cent MPS by August 2018.
- The benefits expected out of this are
- Improving market depth and liquidity by unlocking the free float of shares.
- Forcing promoters to relax their grip on listed companies that can improve corporate governance by giving public shareholders and institutions greater say in corporate actions that are put to vote.

#### **About Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI)**

- FPI involves holding financial assets from a country outside of the investor's own.
- FPI holdings can include stocks, ADRs, bonds, mutual funds, and exchange-traded funds.
- Along with foreign direct investment (FDI), FPI is one of the common ways for investors to participate in an overseas economy, especially retail investors.
- Unlike FDI, FPI consists of passive ownership; investors have no control over ventures or direct ownership of property or a stake in a company.

#### **About Portfolio Investment Scheme (PIS)**

- Through this scheme of the Reserve Bank of India, NRIs and OCBs (Overseas Corporate Bodies) can purchase and sell shares and debentures of Indian companies on a recognized stock exchange.
- Transactions can be routed through NRI Savings Account with a designated bank branch.

#### **Source**

- <https://www.thehindu.com/business/markets/nri-fpi-investments-merger-on-long-route/article29394743.ece>
- <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/columns/all-you-wanted-to-know-about-mps-rule/article10007585.ece#>
- <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/f/foreign-portfolio-investment-fpi.asp>
- <https://www.icicibank.com/nri-banking/investments/pis-investment.page>

## **5) Kashmir apples to escape lockdown**

### **Why in News?**

- The Centre's Special Market Intervention Price Scheme (MISP) is now providing much-needed assistance to growers' hopes of salvaging the Rs.16, 000 crore apple industry amid the continuous lockdown.

### **News in detail**

- The government's plan is to procure almost 12 lakh metric tonnes of apple this season, under the MISP, with the help of the National Agriculture Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED).
- Nearly 60% of the estimated annual apple production will be procured from the apple growers nearer their door steps.
- It's expected to enhance growers' income by about Rs. 2,000 crore.
- The period of procurement would be for six months, starting September, at a cost of Rs. 8,000 crore.
- It would also help stabilise the price of apples and help maintain a uniform rate in the open market across the country, after India raised tariffs on apple imports from the United States earlier this year.
- Kashmir produced 20 lakh metric tonne of apple in 2018, contributing 73% to the total apple production of the country.

### **Background**

- Kashmir's famed apple is battling to get exported outside the State this year.
- This year, the State government failed to rope in enough trucks for apple export after the August decision to revoke J&K's special status, followed by a lockdown and communications blockade.
- It had resulted in the closure and poor flow of fruit from the main mandis (wholesale

market) at Baramulla's Sopore, Srinagar's Parimpora, Shopian and Anantnag's Batengo.

- The night-time functioning of Sopore mandi had also come to a grinding halt after four civilians were shot at on September 6 by suspected militants "for their attempts to revive the export".
- Militants are directing orchardists to stop exporting apple this year in a bid to sever all ties with mainland India.

#### **Market Intervention Scheme (MIS)**

- MIS is a price support mechanism implemented on the request of State Governments for procurement of perishable and horticultural commodities in the event of a fall in market prices.
- The Scheme is implemented when there is at least 10% increase in production or 10% decrease in the ruling rates over the previous normal year.
- It works in a similar fashion to Minimum Support Price based procurement mechanism for food grains, but is an ad hoc mechanism.
- Its objective is to protect the growers of these horticultural/agricultural commodities from making distress sale in the event of bumper crop during the peak arrival period when prices fall below very low level.
- Thus it provides remunerative prices to the farmers in case of glut in production and fall in prices.

#### **Source**

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kashmir-apples-to-escape-lockdown/article29385850.ece>
- [http://www.arthapedia.in/index.php?title=Market\\_Intervention\\_Scheme\\_\(MIS\)](http://www.arthapedia.in/index.php?title=Market_Intervention_Scheme_(MIS))

## **6) Automobile sales still in free fall**

### **Why in news?**

- According to data by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), the sale of automobiles in the month of August has declined by 23.55% – the worst drop in monthly sales since started recording wholesale vehicle sales data in 1997-98.

#### **News in detail**

- The industry is reeling under a prolonged demand slump mainly due to poor consumer sentiment amid slowing economic growth.
- Domestic passenger vehicle sales contracted for the tenth straight month to about 1.96 lakh units down 31.6% from about 2.87 lakh units in August 2018.
- Commercial vehicle sales – which are usually seen as an indicator of the economic activity in the country, tumbled nearly 39% to 51,897 units.
- Motorcycle sales, which largely reflect the demand slump in the rural market.
- It is believed by the industry that a cut in GST may also help revive the sales in rural market.

#### **Society of Indian automobile manufacturers (SIAM)**

- SIAM is a not for profit apex Industry body representing leading vehicle and vehicular engine manufacturers in India.
- It facilitates dialogue between the industries, government, and national as well as international organisations.
- It also works closely with concerned stakeholders and helps evolve rules, regulations and policies related to the automobile manufacturing.

#### **Source**

- <https://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/passenger-vehicle-sales-decline-for-10th-straight-month-down-3157-in-august/article29373325.ece/amp/>
- <http://www.siamindia.com/>

# International Relations

## 1) India, ASEAN agree to review free trade pact in goods

### Why in News?

- India and the **10-member ASEAN** have agreed to **initiate a review of the bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) in goods** to make it more business-friendly and boost economic ties.

▪ **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** - Treaty between two or more countries to establish a free trade area where **commerce in goods and services** can be conducted **across their common borders, without tariffs or hindrances** but (in contrast to a common market) **capital or labor may not move freely**. Member countries **usually impose a uniform tariff** (called common external tariff) on trade with non-member countries.

### News in Detail

- This was agreed upon during the meeting between economic ministers of ASEAN and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal in Bangkok.
- The two sides also decided to constitute a joint committee for this purpose.
- Both sides also gained the recommendations of the ASEAN-India business council to further promote the potential of bilateral trade through the utilisation of the free trade pact as well as cooperation in some areas like financial technology, connectivity, startups and innovation.

### India-ASEAN Trade in goods pact

- The India-ASEAN trade in goods pact came into force from January 2010.
- Under the pact, two trading partners set timelines for eliminating duties on the maximum number of goods traded between the two regions.
- The 10 ASEAN members are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, Laos and Vietnam.

- The bilateral trade between the two sides has increased to \$80.8 billion in 2018 from \$73.6 billion in 2017.

### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/india-asean-agree-to-review-free-trade-pact-in-goods/article29383424.ece>
- [http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/free-trade-agreement.html#targetText=free%20trade%20agreement&targetText=Treaty%20\(such%20as%20FTAA%20or,labor%20may%20not%20move%20freely](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/free-trade-agreement.html#targetText=free%20trade%20agreement&targetText=Treaty%20(such%20as%20FTAA%20or,labor%20may%20not%20move%20freely)

## 2) No second consular access planned for Jadhav: Pakistan

### Why in News?

- Pakistan on 12/09/2019 said there was **no plan to grant India consular access** to death row convict Kulbhushan Jadhav **for a second time**.

### Background

- Mr. **Jadhav**, 49, was **sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court** on charges of **"espionage and terrorism"** in April 2017.
- Following this, India had moved the International Court of Justice (ICJ), seeking a stay on the sentence and further remedies.
- The International Court of Justice (**ICJ**) in **its ruling** on July 17 had **put on continued stay the death sentence** handed to Jadhav by a Pakistani military court for alleged espionage.
- The ICJ had asked Pakistan to immediately inform Jadhav of his rights under Article 36 of the Vienna Convention, and grant India consular access.
- The ICJ, in its ruling, asked Pakistan to ensure **"effective review and reconsideration of his conviction and sentences"**.
- Charge d'Affaires at the High Commission in Islamabad Gaurav Ahluwalia met Mr. Jadhav on September 2 for two hours after Pakistan granted consular access to the retired Navy officer following the ICJ directive.

- Pakistan claims that its security forces arrested Mr. Jadhav from the restive Balochistan province on March 3, 2016 after he reportedly entered from Iran.
- However, India says he was kidnapped from Iran where he had business interests after retiring from the Navy.

#### What is consular access?

- India had demanded consular access to Jadhav under the rules of the **Vienna Convention on Consular Relations of 1963**. This is an international treaty that defines consular relations between independent states.
- A **consul**, who is not a diplomat, is a **representative of a foreign state in a country** and works for the interests of his countrymen in the host country.
- **Article 36** of the Vienna Convention states that foreign nationals who are arrested or detained be given notice without delay of their right to have their embassy or consulate notified of that arrest.
- If the detained foreign national so requests, the police must fax that notice to the embassy or consulate, which can then check up on the person.

#### Why is it so important for India in the Jadhav case?

- Jadhav was awarded death sentence after a **secret trial**. There is every chance that the trial was a sham.
- If India gets consular access to Jadhav, it can demolish the Pakistani case by advising Jadhav on the various aspects of the case.
- Consular access might also mean that **Jadhav's own views would get heard**.
- Pakistan had extracted a video confession from Jadhav under force. It could pull off such stunts only by denying consular access to India.
- With consular access to Jadhav, India can help Jadhav and his family extend their legal fight.
- India will also get access to Jadhav's real version of events leading to his arrest. This information can help India expose Pakistan.

#### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/no-second-consular-access-planned-for-jadhav-pakistan/article29401584.ece>

- <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/india-consular-access-kulbhushan-jadhav-1594288-2019-09-02>
- <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/politics-and-nation/kulbhushan-jadhav-case-what-is-consular-access-and-why-does-it-matter/articleshow/58733759.cms?from=mdr>

### 3) India, Nepal inaugurate Motihari-Amlekhganj oil pipeline

#### Why in News?

- PM Modi and Nepal PM K P Sharma Oli **jointly inaugurated South Asia's first cross-border petroleum products pipeline** from Motihari in India to Amlekhgunj in Nepal on 10/09/2019.

#### Significance of the pipeline

- The 69-km Motihari-Amlekhgunj pipeline have a capacity of 2 million metric ton per annum.
- It will **provide cleaner petroleum products** at **affordable cost** to the people of Nepal.
- It will help Nepal **ensure stable energy supply** for its domestic market.
- The project is being led by the **Indian Oil Corporation** and the **Nepal Oil Corporation** which has built infrastructure in Amlekhgunj for distribution of energy in the Himalayan country.

#### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-nepal-inaugurate-motihari-amlekhgunj-oil-pipeline/article29382367.ece>

### 4) Pakistan Denies Use of Airspace to Indian President

#### Why in News?

- Federal Aviation Minister of Pakistan denied the use of Pakistani airspace to Indian President Ram Nath Kovind for his flight to Iceland **because of India's continued aggression against and oppression of the Kashmiri people**.

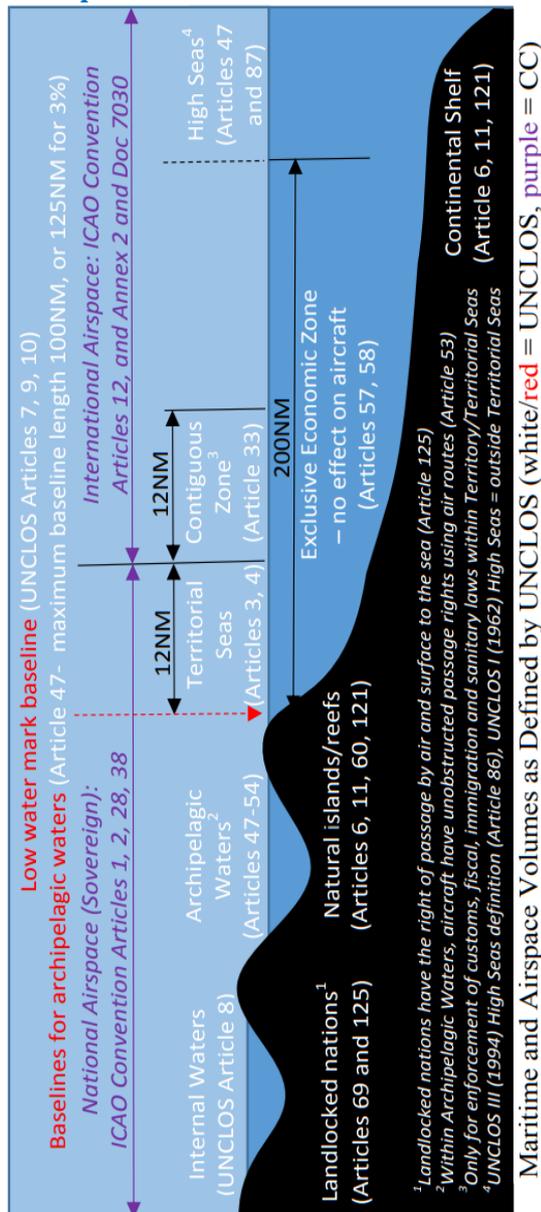
#### Background

- **After the Balakot airstrikes**, India and Pakistan had closed their respective

airspace to each other. Pakistan kept the ban in place for nearly five months.

- After the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill, Pakistan had partially shut its airspace to India.
- However, Pakistan allowed Prime Minister Narendra Modi to use its airspace for his visit to France in August 2019 as a goodwill gesture.

### International Airspace and Civil/Military Cooperation



- Key aspects about the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)** and the **Convention on International Civil Aviation** ('Chicago Convention' or 'CC') are as follows.

- Although **UNCLOS** is titled as a 'Law of the Sea', its **provisions also affect airspace and the operation of aircraft**.
- In particular, UNCLOS **defines volumes of airspace** that are **sovereign and international** (where States may make laws and where States may not make universal laws respectively).
- **States may also enact laws** for their **own citizens and aircraft** registered in those States for **operations within international airspace**.
- The volumes of airspace are **dependent on the definition of 'baselines'** in **UNCLOS**, which are generally based on the maritime shoreline.
- Archipelagic Waters and the airspace above them are sovereign and part of the territory of the State concerned (Article 28 of the CC).
- However, the **sovereignty of archipelagic airspace is not the same as other territorial airspace**, as aircraft have the **right of 'continuous and expeditious' passage**, so cannot be denied transit through this area (UNCLOS Article 53).
- **Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) do not have any legal consequences for aviation** (UNCLOS Articles 57 and 58).
- While the CC and its Annexes, including Annex 2, are **not applicable to State aircraft** (military, police or customs) in general, the Convention does place requirements upon States regarding the interaction between military and civil aircraft.
- For example, **State aircraft may not overfly the territory of another State without permission**, and regulations must be enacted to require State aircraft to have 'due regard' for the safety of navigation of civil aircraft (Article 3 of the Convention).
- In addition, Article 3 of the CC requires States to ensure that **military aircraft do not endanger civil aircraft**, but these are only for two specific situations – **use of weapons and interception**.
- There are **no requirements for State aircraft** to comply with civil requirements **in international airspace**.

### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/pakistan-denies-indian-presidents-request-to-use-its-airspace-for-foreign-visits/article29361155.ece>

- <https://www.icao.int/APAC/Documents/edocs/International%20Airspace%20and%20Civil-Military%20Cooperation.pdf>

# SCIENCE and TECHNOLOGY

## 1) Cryodrakon Boreas is the largest flying animal of all time

### Why in News?

- Scientists unveiled a **new species of pterosaur**, the **plane-sized reptiles** that lorded over primeval skies above T-rex, Triceratops and other dinosaurs of the **late Cretaceous**.

### Cryodrakon Boreas



- It has a wingspan of 10 m and weighs 250 kg.
- Its remains were first discovered more than 30 years ago in Alberta, Canada. At that time it was **mistakenly identified as Quetzalcoatlus**, the other giant pterosaur which has been considered as the largest flying animal until now.
- A closer look at the fossil remains of a juvenile and the intact giant neck bone of a full-grown specimen helped to classify these as a new species.
- Like other winged reptiles living at the same time, about 77 million years ago, C. boreas was **carnivorous** and probably **fed on lizards, small mammals and even baby dinosaurs**.
- Despite a likely capacity to cross large bodies of water, the location of fossil remains and the animal's features point to an **inland habitat**.
- There are **more than 100 known species of pterosaurs**.
- Despite their large size and wide distribution — across North and South America, Asia, Africa and Europe — **only fragmentary remains have been unearthed**, making the new find especially important.

### More about Pterosaurs

- **Pterosaurs** are any of the **flying reptiles** that flourished during all periods (Triassic, Jurassic, and Cretaceous) of the **Mesozoic Era** (252.2 million to 66 million years ago).
- Although pterosaurs are **not dinosaurs**, both are **archosaurs**, or “**ruling reptiles**,” a group to which birds and crocodiles also belong.
- Pterosaurs **were not only the first reptiles capable of flight**; they were also **the first vertebrates to fly**.

### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/cryodrakon-boreas-the-largest-flying-animal-was-a-plane-sized-reptile-study/article29394827.ece>
- <https://www.britannica.com/animal/pterosaur>

## 2) Russia scraps robot after space odyssey

### Why in News?

- Russia announced its **decision to terminate robot FEDOR**.

### Background

- Fedor, or **Final Experimental Demonstration Object Research**, was built to assist space station astronauts.
- Fedor, officially **Skybot F-850**, rocketed to the International Space Station (ISS) on August 22 (*refer Pulse, Issue No. 11*) in an unmanned spacecraft carrying supplies, entering the orbiting laboratory five days later after failing in its first attempt to dock at ISS.
- The robot touched down back on Earth on Sep 7, 2019, after spending 10 days in ISS.
- But Fedor turned out to have a design that does not work well in space—standing 180 centimetres (six feet) tall, its long legs were not needed on space walks.
- The Russian space agency said the legs were immobilised during the trip and Fedor was not programmed to grab space station hand rails to move about in microgravity.
- Thus it was decided **it cannot replace human astronauts on long and risky space walks**

- Fedor was **originally intended as a rescue robot for the emergencies** ministry and was also trained to handle handguns.

#### Source

- <https://phys.org/news/2019-09-russia-scraps-robot-fedor-space.html>

### 3) Water found for the first time on potentially habitable planet

#### Why in News?

- Astronomers have for the **first time discovered water in the atmosphere of an exoplanet** with Earth-like temperatures that **could support life** as we know it.

#### News in Detail

- **K2-18b**, which is **eight times the mass of Earth**, is now the only planet orbiting a star outside the Solar System, or 'exoplanet', known to have both water and temperatures that could be potentially habitable, according to a study published in the journal Nature Astronomy.
- The planet orbits the **cool dwarf star K2-18**, which is about 110 light years from Earth in the Leo constellation.
- The discovery is the first successful atmospheric detection for an exoplanet orbiting in its star's 'habitable zone', at a distance where water can exist in liquid form.
- K2-18b is significantly heavier and has a **different atmospheric composition** than that of Earth.
- The team used archive data from 2016 and 2017 captured by the ESA/NASA Hubble Space Telescope and developed open-source algorithms to analyse the starlight filtered through K2-18b's atmosphere.
- The results revealed the molecular signature of water vapour, also indicating the **presence of hydrogen and helium** in the planet's atmosphere, researchers said.
- They believe that other molecules including **nitrogen and methane may be present** but, with current observations, they remain undetectable.
- Further studies are required to estimate cloud coverage and the percentage of atmospheric water present, the researchers said.

#### What is an exoplanet?

- **Planets beyond our Solar System** are called exoplanets
- The **first exoplanet was discovered in 1992**, orbiting a pulsar (a neutron star that emits electromagnetic radiation)
- **More than 4,000 have been detected** to date using several techniques
- Many of these worlds are large planets believed to resemble Jupiter or Neptune
- Many giant planets have been found orbiting very close to their stars

#### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/water-found-for-first-time-on-potentially-habitable-planet/article29397908.ece>
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-49648746>

### 4) Species discovery

#### Why in News?

- Scientists from the Botanical Survey of India (BSI) have discovered two new species of Zingiber, commonly referred to as ginger, from **Nagaland**.

#### Zingiber dimapurense

- It was found in the Dimapur district of Nagaland.
- It is taller in size, with leafy shoots measuring 90-120 cm high.
- The **lip of the flower** (modified corolla) is **white in colour**, with **dense dark-purplish red blotches**.
- Its **pollen is a creamy-white and ovato-ellipsoidal**, whereas the fruit is an oblong 4.5 cm-5.5 cm long capsule.

#### Zingiber perenense

- It has been discovered from the Peren district of Nagaland.
- The leafy shoots of Zingiber perenense reach up to 70 cm in height.
- The lip of the **flower is white** with **purplish-red streaks** throughout, and the **pollen is ellipsoidal**.

#### Centre of diversity

- The genus Zingiber has 141 species distributed throughout Asia, Australia and the South Pacific, with its **centre of diversity in Southeast Asia**.
- More than 20 species have been found in northeastern India. Over the past few years, more than half a dozen species have been discovered from different States of northeast India only.

- Previous discoveries of Zingiber include **Hedychium chingmeianum** from the Tuensang district of Nagaland, **Caulokaempferia dinabandhuensis** from the Ukhrul district in Manipur in 2017, and **Zingiber bipinianum** from Meghalaya in 2015.
- The high diversity of ginger species in northeast India reveals that the climate is conducive for the growth and diversity of the genus.

#### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/two-new-species-of-ginger-discovered-from-nagaland/article29385926.ece>

## 5) DRDO successfully tests indigenous anti-tank missile

### Why in News?

- The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** successfully flight tested an **indigenously-developed low weight, fire and forget Man Portable Antitank Guided Missile (MPATGM)** in the ranges of Kurnool on September 11.
- This is the third series of successful testing of MPATGM.
- The missile is incorporated with **state-of-the-art Infrared Imaging Seeker** along with **advanced avionics**.
- The test paves the way for the Army to have developed **third generation** man portable ATGM indigenously.

### About ATGM

- **Antitank guided missiles** are **medium or long-range** missile whose primary purpose is to **destroy tanks and other armoured vehicles**.
- They can be directed to a target by **several different guidance systems**, including laser guiding, television camera, or wire guiding.
- ATGMs **can be launched from aircraft or land vehicles or by infantry**.
- The most compact systems are small enough to be carried and operated by a single soldier.
- The **advanced models** are “**fire and forget**” missiles, which means that once the ATGM has been launched, it **directs itself toward the target** without further

action from the operator **by using digital imaging**.

### About DRDO

- DRDO was formed in 1958 from the **amalgamation** of the then already functioning **Technical Development Establishment (TDEs) of the Indian Army** and the **Directorate of Technical Development & Production (DTDP)** with the **Defence Science Organisation (DSO)**.
- DRDO was then a small organisation with 10 establishments or laboratories. Over the years, it has grown multi-directionally in terms of the variety of subject disciplines, number of laboratories, achievements and stature.

### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/drdo-successfully-tests-indigenous-anti-tank-missile/article29394941.ece>
- <https://www.britannica.com/technology/antitank-guided-missile>
- <https://www.drdo.gov.in/drdo/English/index.jsp?pg=genesis.jsp>

## 6) Big leap for naval variant of LCA Tejas

### Why in News?

- The naval variant of the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas made a successful short arrested landing on the Shore Based Test Facility (SBTF) in Hansa Goa.

### News in detail

- This is a big step forward in the delayed project for the LCA to eventually operate from an aircraft carrier.
- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) said that this would pave the way for this indigenous platform to undertake aircraft carrier landing demonstration on board INS Vikramaditya.
- The navy light combat aircraft (LCA) made its maiden successful trap on the SBTF with the tail hook of the aircraft connecting with the arrestor wire on the deck and coming to halt within a short distance.
- The naval LCA made its maiden flight in April 2012 and two prototypes have been flying as part of the development. The **first prototype (NP1)** made a successful first flight from the SBTF in 2014.

- The aircraft, Naval Prototype (NP)-1, is a twin seater.
- The **SBTF**, which replicates the flight deck of an aircraft carrier, was **specifically built to train naval pilots** in the complex manoeuvres of landing on the short flight deck of an aircraft carrier before they move on to the actual carrier.
- The **naval LCA** is designed with **stronger landing gears** to absorb forces exerted by the ski jump ramp during take-off, to be airborne within 200m and land within 100m, as against 1,000m required for normal runways.
- Its **special flight control law mode** allows **hands-free take-off**, relieving the pilot workload, as the aircraft leaps from the ramp and **automatically puts the aircraft in an ascending trajectory**.
- In December 2016, then Navy Chief Admiral Sunil Lanba stated that the LCA in the present form “does not meet the carrier capability which is required by the Navy”
- The Navy currently operates **Russian MiG-29K** fighters from **INS Vikramaditya**. They will also fly from the **first Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) Vikrant** once it enters service.

#### About LCA Tejas

- LCA Tejas is an **indigenously built single jet engine, single seat, delta wing, multi role light fighter** built by Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) & Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)
- It was initiated to substitute Mig-21 fighters.
- The LCA was renamed as “Tejas” in 2003.

#### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/big-leap-for-naval-variant-of-lca-tejas/article29410561.ece#targetText=The%20naval%20variant%20of%20the%20oper%20rate%20from%20an%20aircraft%20carrier>
- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HAL\\_Tejas](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/HAL_Tejas)

### 7) Army to get indigenous tank ammunition

#### Why in News?

- Maintaining focus on the ‘**Make in India**’ initiative, the **Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)**, has **approved indigenous**

**development of ammunition for the Army’s T-72 and T-90 tanks.**

#### News in detail

- DAC accorded approval for indigenous development and production of **the main gun 125mm Armour Piercing Fin Stabilised Discarding-Sabot (APFSDS) ammunition** for T-72/T-90 tanks by the Indian industry.
- The project which is worth approximately Rs. 2000 crore would substantially enhance the enemy armour penetration capability.
- The DAC also **approved procurement** of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) developed and Industry manufactured **Mechanical Mine Layer (Self Propelled)** to improve **automated mine laying capability** of the Indian army.

#### Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)

- The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) under the Defence Minister was constituted for **overall guidance of the defence procurement planning process**.
- The objective of the Defence Acquisition Council is to **ensure expeditious procurement** of the approved requirements of the Armed Forces in terms of capabilities sought and time frame prescribed **by optimally utilizing the allocated budgetary resources**.

#### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/army-to-get-indigenous-tank-ammunition/article29412872.ece>
- <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/erecontent.aspx?relid=22958>

### 8) Chandrayaan 2 orbiter ‘sights’ Vikram lander on moon

#### Why in News?

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has retrieved images and located the lander Vikram on the moon on September 8 and is analysing them for a clear picture of the lander’s condition.
- For more details, refer *Pulse Issue No. 13*

#### Background

- The Vikram lander lost contact with earth, on September 7, 12 minutes into its descent onto the lunar surface.

- It is believed to have deviated from its path, fallen silent, and probably crashed on moon.

#### News in detail

- The pictures sent by the main Chandrayaan 2 spacecraft, which continues to orbit the moon from pole to pole from a 100-km distance captured the image of the lander.
- The lander was spotted some distance away — possibly about half a kilometre — from its intended touchdown point.
- The “hard-landing” of Vikram had made the task of reviving links more difficult as it may not have the “right orientation,” and may not have landed on its four legs.

#### Key payloads of the mission

- Of the 14 payloads aboard India’s second moon mission, four are from the **Space Physics Laboratory (SPL)** of the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) at Thumba.
- Of the four, two — **RAMBHA-LM (Radio Anatomy of Moon Bound Hypersensitive Ionosphere and Atmosphere-Langmuir Probe)** and **ChaSTE (Chandra’s Surface Thermophysical Experiment)** — are on the **lander**.
- RAMBHA, which is expected to provide valuable information on the lunar

ionosphere, is made up of two components; one aboard the lander and the other, on the orbiter.

- **CHACE-2 (Chandra’s Altitudinal Composition Explorer)** – a payload on the orbiter — is functioning perfectly.
- CHACE-2 is designed to **measure the composition of the lunar exosphere**, and is an improvement on CHACE, which flew aboard the Moon Impact Probe (MIP) on the 2008 Chandrayaan-1 mission.
- The second SPL payload aboard the Chandrayaan-2 orbiter, the RAMBHA-Dual Frequency Radio Science experiment (**RAMBHA-DFRS**), will **study altitude variations of electron density in the moon’s ionosphere**.

#### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/chandrayaan-2-vikram-lander-located-on-lunar-surface-isro-chairman/article29367136.ece>
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/chandrayaan-2-vssc-scientists-keep-fingers-crossed-for-establishing-contact-with-vikram/article29369037.ece>

# PIB ANALYSIS

## 1) Launch of National Animal Disease Control Programme:

### About National Animal Disease Control:

- Livestock sector plays an important role in the national economy and socio-economic development of the country. It is emerging as an important growth engine of the Indian economy and its share in GDP has gradually risen.
- A significant obstacle for the growth in terms of production from livestock and poultry is the prevalence of diseases of economic importance as these cause huge economic losses nationally.

### About the Programme:-

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi shall be launching the National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP) for eradicating the Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) and Brucellosis in the livestock, on 11th September from Mathura in Uttar Pradesh.
- From the central government 100% funding shall be provided of Rs12,652 Crores for a period of five years till 2024, the programme aims at vaccinating 500 million Livestock including cattle, buffalo, sheep, goats and pigs against the FMD.
- The programme aims at vaccinating 36 Million Female Bovine Calves annually in its fight against the Brucellosis disease.
- The Programme has two components, to control the disease by 2025 and eradication by 2030.
- PM shall also be launching the National Artificial Insemination Programme on that day.

### Why in News?

- PM Narendra Modi is launching the National Animal Disease Control Programme for eradicating the Foot and Mouth Disease.

### Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1584563>

## 2) Launch of Kisan Maan-Dhan Yojana:-

### About Kisan Maan-Dhan Yojana:

- Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maan-Dhan Yojana (PM-KMY) is an old age pension scheme for all land holding Small and Marginal Farmers (SMFs) in the country. It is a voluntary and contributory pension scheme for the entry age group of 18 to 40 years. Farmers can contribute towards their pension fund for a fixed number of years.
- Once the account matures, these pensioners will receive a steady income from their pension accounts.

### About the Scheme:

- PM shall launch the Kisan Maan Dhan Yojana on the 12th of September at Ranchi, Jharkhand.
- The scheme secures 5 crore small and marginal farmers by providing a minimum pension of Rs 3000 per month, to those who attain 60 years of age.
- The scheme has an outlay of Rs 10774 crores for the next three years; farmer's monthly contribution can be made from instalments of PM-KISAN or through CSCs.
- In case of death of main pensioner, the nominee will be able to withdraw the money. If the spouse has been registered for nominee then he/she will attain 50% of the pension amount.
- The central government has handed over to the Life Insurance Corporation of India.

### Why in News?

- Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maan-Dhan Yojana (PM-KMY) is an old age pension scheme for all land holding Small and Marginal Farmers (SMFs) in the country. By launch of this scheme provides financial security to poor and old farmers, and help in eradicating the sorry economic condition of Indian agricultural workers.

### Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1584556>

### 3) India participated in Thessaloniki International Fair:

#### About Thessaloniki International Fair:

- The Thessaloniki International Fair is one of the largest fairs of Greece. This was first held in 1926 while it kept for decades a key role further strengthening the financial and diplomatic relations between all the participating countries.
- It is divided into several thematic structures and open for trade visitors as well as consumers. Hundreds of products and companies related to energy, technology, entrepreneurship, innovation, automobile, books and construction will be on display.

#### About the Participation

- An Indian Delegation led by Minister of State for Commerce and Industry Hardeep Singh Puri participated in the 84th Thessaloniki International Fair (TIF) in Greece along with senior officials, businessmen and other prominent Indian entrepreneurs were Part of the delegation.
- New India Pavilion was inaugurated by Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, Mr. Kyriakos Mitsotakis and the Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, Hardeep Singh Puri on 7th September 2019.
- Highlighted the prospects for the development of Indian business in Greece and the wider region of Southeast Europe to strengthen bilateral trade relations between the two countries.
- Hardeep Singh said India's economy is expected to reach USD 5 trillion in 2025 and it will be the largest in World.
- India has reached the 52nd place in the Global Innovation Index 2019

#### Why in News?

- Recently India participated in Thessaloniki International Fair. By this participation the event has political significance in addition to commerce and financial importance.

#### Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1584536>

### 4) Joint Statement of 7th RCEP Ministerial Meeting:-

#### About Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership:

- The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), which is a proposed Free Trade Agreement between ten ASEAN member states and their six Free Trade Agreement (FTA) partners namely India, Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand and Republic of Korea, is expected to provide market access for India's goods and services exports and encourage greater investments and technology into India.

#### About the meeting:-

- Piyush Goyal participated in 7th RCEP Ministerial Meeting held in Bangkok, Thailand on 8th September 2019.

#### Why in News?

- 7th Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) meeting was held in Bangkok.

#### Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1584515>

### 5) ANGAN - International Conference on Energy Efficiency in Building Sector:-

#### About ANGAN:

- It is a Joint military exercise between INDO-US Defence Cooperation. It is one of the largest joint running military training and Defence cooperation between India-US.
- It was conducted at Joint Base Lewis Mc Chord, Washington and this will be 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>

## 6) Ceremony for 17 Squadron 'GOLDEN ARROWS'

### About Golden Arrows Squadron:

- The squadron was formed in 1951, and initially, it flew de Havilland Vampire F Mk 52 fighters.
- The Golden Arrows Squadron was commanded by Dhanoa during the Kargil war in 1999.
- The British-built de Havilland Vampire was the first jet fighter the Golden Arrows operated
- The Golden Arrows were disbanded in 2006 after the Indian Air Force began gradual phase-out of early MiG-21 variants.

### About the Ceremony:

- Resurrection ceremony for 17 Squadron, AF was held at Air Force Station Ambala
- The Indian Air Force is expected to resurrect its 'Golden Arrows' 17 Squadron which will be the first unit to fly the multi-role Rafale fighter jets.

### Why in News?

- The Golden Arrows squadron was formed in 1951, and initially, it flew de Havilland Vampire F Mk 52 fighters. Recently ceremony for 17 Squadron "Golden Arrows" was held at Ambala, Air force station.

### Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1584651>

## 7) Inauguration of cross border petroleum product pipelines:-

### About Petroleum Product Pipelines:

- Pipeline transport is the long-distance transportation of a liquid or gas through a system of pipes typically to a market area for consumption.

### About Cross Border Pipeline:

- It is jointly inaugurated as South Asia's first cross border pipeline, which is 69 kms long pipeline that will run from Motihari in Bihar to Amelkhanj in Nepal.
- It has been constructed by India in just 15 months, which is half of its 30 month deadline.
- This pipeline will help in tackling oil storage problem in Nepal and doing away with transportation of petroleum products via tankers

### Why in News?

- The new pipeline will be a game changer for Nepal ensuring cleaner petroleum products at affordable cost to people.

### Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1584627>

## 8) India's second Multimodal Terminal:

### About Multimodal Terminal:

- The capacity of the terminal is 30 lakh tonnes per annum
  - It will grow to 54.8 lakh tonnes per annum after an investment of ₹376 crores for capacity enhancement in Phase II under PPP mode
  - The terminal was built at a cost of ₹290 crores. It took two years to complete the terminal which was constructed on the river Ganga under Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP)
  - Prime Minister will dedicate to nation the second Multi Modal Terminal built at Sahibganj in Jharkhand on 12 September, 2019.
  - The Multi-Modal terminal at Sahibganj will open up industries of Jharkhand and Bihar to the global market and provide Indo-Nepal cargo connectivity through waterways route.
  - It will play an important role in transportation of domestic coal from the local mines in Rajmahal area to various thermal power plants located along NW-1.
- ### Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP):
- Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) for capacity augmentation of navigation on National Waterway-1 (NW-1) is being implemented with the technical assistance and investment support of the World Bank.
  - One of the major problems for commercially viable and safe navigation on NW-1 is low depth upstream of Farakka due to low discharges from tributaries and difficult hydro morphological characteristics of river Ganga
  - Finance Minister announced JMVP in Budget Speech in July 2014, to enable commercial navigation of at least 1500 tonnes vessels in Ganga.
  - States that come under this project are: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal

### Why in News?

- India recently launched its 2nd Multimodal terminal at Sahibganj in Jharkhand.

### Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1584628>

## 9) Launch of UNCCD Drought Toolbox:

### About Drought Tool Box:

- Drought toolbox is an online web platform, a one-stop shop for all drought-preparedness measures with a link to the various relevant tools in other organisations.
- The tools are categorized in line with three pillars of drought preparedness:
  1. Monitoring, early warning and forecasting tools used by decision makers.
  2. Vulnerability assessment tools for identifying hotspots.
  3. Risk mitigation tools with key “policy” and “technical” measures.
- The current procedure for declaring drought is very complex in most countries. This tool can be used by countries to assess and evaluate drought vulnerability in their regions. This can help countries improve their preparedness for dealing with drought.

### About the Launch:

- The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) is currently testing a drought toolbox which uses a total of 15 to 30 different parameters to assess drought risk and vulnerability of a geographical region.
- UN convention was given the task of developing such a tool by countries during the previous Conference of Parties (CoP) meeting at the Ordos in China in 2017.
- Government of India has published two important documents in respect of managing a drought.
- The first step is to look at two mandatory indicators:
  - Rainfall deviation and dry spell. Depending on the extent of the deviation, and whether or not there is a dry spell, the manual specifies various situations that may or may not be considered a drought trigger.
- The second step is to look at four impact indicators agriculture, vegetation indices

based on remote sensing, soil moisture, and hydrology. Each impact can be assessed on the basis of various indices.

- The intensity of drought: The States may consider any three of the four types of the Impact Indicators (one from each) for assessment of drought, the intensity of the calamity and make a judgement.
- If all three chosen indicators are in the ‘severe’ category, it amounts to severe drought; and if two of the three chosen impact indicators are in the ‘moderate’ or ‘severe’ class, it amounts to moderate drought.

### Why in News?

- Recently UNCCD has launched a Drought Toolbox which is used to stop all drought preparedness.
- By this launch it help the countries in framing or fine-tuning their respective national drought policies in due course based on monitoring, forecast, and early warning

### Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1584759>

## 10) Indo - Thailand Joint Military Exercise MAITREE - 2019:

### About Exercise MAITREE:

- Exercise MAITREE is an annual training event that is conducted in India and Thailand alternatively, since 2006.
- In the backdrop of changing facets of global terrorism, this exercise is a significant exercise for both the nations as they face the security challenges from terrorism.
- It will enhance the level of Defence cooperation between Indian Army (IA) and Royal Thailand Army (RTA) which will further foster Defence cooperation.
- The joint military exercise between the Indian Army (IA) and the Royal Thailand Army (RTA) will give a boost to the Defence cooperation and bilateral relations between the two nations.

### MAITREE 2019:

- Indian Army and Royal Thailand Army (RTA) will conduct their joint Military Exercise MAITREE-2019 at Meghalaya from Sept 16-29, 2019.

- The contingents of Indian Army and Royal Thailand Army (RTA) comprising of 50 soldiers each will participate in the exercise.
- The scope of this joint military exercise covers, company-level joint training on counter-terrorism operations in jungle and urban scenario.
- MAITREE-2019 will be the third consecutive army engagement between India and Thailand's forces

#### **India- Thailand Relation:**

- The diplomatic relations between India and Thailand were established in 1947. Both countries have witnessed growing warmth, increasing economic and commercial links. Several agreements for development, exchange of high-level visits on both sides are some other common signs of healthy relations between India and Thailand.
- Also, Thailand and India are culturally linked for centuries and India has had a deep influence on Thai culture.

#### **Why in News?**

- Indian Army and Royal Thailand Army (RTA) will conduct their joint Military Exercise MAITREE-2019 at Meghalaya from Sept 16-29, 2019. The Aim of Military Exercise is to share experience gained during various counter-terrorism operations.

#### **Source:**

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1584871>

### **11) Indian Naval Ships Visit to Kota Kinabalu:**

#### **About the Visit:**

- As part of Indian Navy's Overseas Deployment to South East Asia and Western Pacific, Indian Navy ships Sahyadri and Kiltan made a port call at Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia.
- The ships are part of the Indian Navy's Eastern Naval Command under the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Naval Command, based at Visakhapatnam
- The port call is a demonstration of India's warm ties with Malaysia.

#### **Significance:**

- The two ships are equipped with a versatile array of weapons and sensors, can carry multi-role helicopters and

represent the 'coming of age' of India's warship building capabilities.

- During the port call, the Indian Navy and the Royal Malaysian Navy would be participating in the bilateral exercise Samudra Lakshmana.
- The exercise would include a harbour phase wherein professional interactions, official calls, social engagements, visits by the local populace and various sports events would be conducted.
- The Sea Phase of the exercise would enable the two navies to further hone their skills in order to enhance interoperability between the navies to ensure peaceful and secure seas for all.

#### **Why in News?**

- The visit of the IN ships would further bolster the strong bonds of friendship between the two countries and contribute to the security and stability in the region.

#### **Source:**

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1584854>

### **12) White Water Rafting Expedition Rudrashila - Flagged off at Jaisalmer:**

- The white water Rafting Expedition christened 'RUDRASHILA' being undertaken by Kalidhar Battalion was at Jaisalmer Military station.
- The expedition christened 'Rudrashila' has been organized to commemorate the 75th Raising day of the Kalidhar Battalion.
- 'Rudrashila' takes its name from the famed Rudraprayag tributary of the Ganges River in the Mountains of Uttarakhand.
- Major Ravi Kant Gaurav leading the expedition with his Kalidhar battalion under the aegis of Battle Axe division.
- 'Kalidhar Battalion' was raised on 01 November 1943 and has participated in all major operations of the Indian Army including two overseas assignments in Korea in 1953 and UN peacekeeping Mission in Congo in 2005-06.
- Team led by Major Ravi Kant Gaurav comprising of two Officers, Four Junior Commissioned Officers and 18 Soldiers will cover a total distance of 140 kilo meters from Rudraprayag to Rishikesh over some of the most difficult and dangerous rapids in mighty Ganges River.

- The expedition will be conducted from 01 October to 04 October 2019.

**Source:**

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1584853>

### 13) Launch Of Maritime Communication in India:

**About the Launch:**

- Union Minister for Communications, Electronics & Information Technology and Law & Justice Shri Ravi Shankar Prasad has launched the maritime communication services at Mumbai on 13 September 2019.
- He said that Maritime Connectivity will enable high-end support to those in sea by providing access to Voice, Data and Video services while traveling on sailing vessels, cruise liners, ships in India, using satellite technology.

**Significance:**

- Nelco, India's leading VSAT solutions provider is the first Indian company that will now provide quality broadband services to the maritime sector.
- Nelco through global partnerships, infrastructure including transponder capacity on satellite of ISRO (Indian Space Research Organization) and a comprehensive service portfolio will help Energy, Cargo and Cruise vessels by enhancing operational efficiency, improving crew welfare and enabling customer services.

**Source:**

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1585036>

**Why in News?**

- Maritime Communication services will enable high-end support to those in sea by providing access to Voice, Data and Video services while traveling on sailing vessels, cruise liners, ships in India, using satellite technology.

### 14) 28th Indo -Thai CORPAT - Closing Ceremony

- The 28th edition of India-Thailand Coordinated Patrol (Indo-Thai CORPAT) between Indian Navy (IN) and Royal Thai Navy (RTN) is being conducted from 5 to 15 September 2019.
- Indian Naval (IN) Ship Kesari and His Majesty's Thailand Ship (HTMS) Kraburi

along with Maritime Patrol Aircraft from both the navies are participating in this CORPAT. It is poised to further enhance strong bilateral ties and maritime cooperation between both countries.

#### Indo - Thailand Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT):

- Indian Navy ships and aircraft of Andaman and Nicobar Command have been participating in biannual Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT) with Royal Thai Navy (RTN) since 2003.
- It reflects India's strong desire for peaceful Indian Ocean safeguarded through good maritime order in the region.

**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.

**About the Closing ceremony:**

- Royal Thai Navy Ship HTMS Kraburi, a Guided Missile Frigate commanded by Capt. Bunpot Jaibunjong and a Naval Maritime Patrol Dornier aircraft of the 3rd Naval Area Command, Royal Thailand Navy, arrived at Port Blair, on 13 September 2019 for the closing ceremony of the 28th cycle of the Indo-Thailand Coordinated Patrol (INDO-THAI CORPAT).
- During the sea phase of the CORPAT from 06 to 12 September 2019, units of both the navies undertook coordinated maritime patrolling in their respective sectors of the International Maritime Boundary Line.

**Why in News?**

- The 28th cycle of Indo-Thai CORPAT seeks to underscore India's peaceful presence and solidarity with friendly and harmonious countries towards ensuring good order in the maritime domain and to strengthen existing bonds between India and Thailand.

**Source:**

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1585046>

## 15) JALDOOT Exhibition Flagged Off by I & B:

- Jaldoot is a travelling exhibition arranged by Regional Outreach Bureau, Pune under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting was flagged off.
- Jaldoot will visit 8 districts of Maharashtra in the next 2 months.
- The exhibition highlights bold initiatives and decisive actions taken by the government.
- The Jaldoot will travel through Pune, Ahmadnagar, Nashik, Jalgaon, Buldhana, Amravati and Solapur districts.

### Background for JALDOOT:

- Prime Minister has launched the campaign on 'Jan Shakti se Jalshakti' Abhiyan for water conservation and to create a Jan-Andolan along the lines of the Swachh Bharat Mission.
- To tackle the water crisis, the Government launched the JALSHAKTI ABHIYAN, water conservation campaign focusing on 1592 stressed blocks in 256 districts of India.
- The Regional Outreach Bureau, ROB, with its headquarter at Pune for Maharashtra and Goa region is the office under the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India. It takes care of

various outreach activities and development communication needs of the Central Government.

- ROB in association with MSRTC (MH State Road Transport Corporation) is launching the Jaldoot campaign with bus exhibition to create the Jaldoot: Travelling Exhibition on Jalshakthi Abhiyan.
- The exhibition consists of various information display panels and Audio-Visual components.

### Jalshakthi Abhiyan:

- The Jalshakthi Abhiyan focus on five key aspects:
  1. Water Conservation and Rain Water Harvesting
  2. Renovation of Traditional and other Water Bodies
  3. Reuse of Water and Recharging of structures
  4. Watershed Development
  5. Intensive Afforestation

### Why in News?

- JALDOOT is an initiative which will take the message of water conservation to masses. It was initiated under Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.

### Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1585075>

# News in Depth

## AIR NEWS

### 1) Bulletproof Jackets by India

#### Who are manufacturing?

- Two PSUs Medani and Ordnance factory at Avadi, Chennai and private firms SNPP (Palwal), Starwire (Faridabad) in Haryana and MKU (Kanpur) in Uttar Pradesh are manufacturing bulletproof jackets as per the BIS norms.
- India will be the fourth country after the US, UK and Germany to have its own national standard on bulletproof jacket which provides 360-degree protection.

#### About:

- The Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) framed a national standard for bulletproof jacket following a direction from the Prime Minister's Office and the Niti Aayog.
- Tough quality norms are set to ensure jackets can be manufactured in various sizes to suite requirement of soldiers and provide 360-degree protection, including from AK-47 hard steel core bullets approaching at 700 metres per second.

#### About BIS

- BIS is the National Standard Body of India established under the BIS Act 2016 for the harmonious development of the activities of standardization, marking and quality certification of goods and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- BIS has been providing traceability and tangibility benefits to the national economy in a number of ways – providing safe reliable quality goods; minimizing health hazards to consumers; promoting exports and imports substitute; control over proliferation of varieties etc. through standardization, certification and testing

#### Why in News?

- India has begun exporting bulletproof jackets as per its own standards to over

100 countries including European nations.

- <http://www.newsonair.com/News?title=India-begins-exporting-bulletproof-jackets-to-over-100-countries&id=371478>

### 2) Measures to boost exports and housing sector.

#### For exports:

- The government will provide a 10,000 crore rupees special window with an aim to help complete ongoing affordable and middle-income housing projects.
- The housing projects considered for the special window have been limited to non-NPA (Non-Performing Assets) and non-NCLT (National Company Law Tribunal) projects.

#### For housing sector:

- The other key incentives include extending the scheme of reimbursement of taxes and duties for export promotion, fully automated electronic refund for Input Tax Credits (ITC) in GST.
- An inter-ministerial group will be set up under the Department of Commerce to monitor export finance credit on a weekly basis.
- The scheme for Remission of Duties or Taxes on Export Product (RoDTEP) will replace Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS) for textiles. Textile and all other sectors which currently enjoy incentives up to 2 % over MEIS will transit into RoDTEP from January 1, 2020.
- The Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC) will expand the scope of export credit insurance service (ECIS) and will offer higher insurance cover to banks' lending working capital for exports.
- India will now have its own version of an annual shopping festival on the lines of the

one hosted by Dubai. This annual shopping festival, likely to begin from March 2020, will be held in four Indian cities and the focus areas would include gems and jewellery, textiles and leather.

- A provision for higher insurance cover on exports by MSMEs was also announced.
- The government will also set up an FTA Utilization Mission headed by a senior officer in the Department of Commerce to

maximise benefits available under Free Trade Agreements (FTAs).

- Priority sector tag for export credit was also announced.

#### **Why in News?**

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has announced a fresh set of measures worth around 70,000 crore rupees to boost exports and housing sector.
- <http://www.newsonair.com/Main-News-Details.aspx?id=371565>

# Hindu Editorial Analysis

## 1) What is ration card portability?

- GS Paper II & III – Economy; social issues; governance

### Context –

- The government has rolled out the “one nation, one ration card scheme” in order to achieve food security.
- India runs the world’s largest food security programme, distributing more than 600 lakh tonnes of subsidised food grain to more than 81 crore beneficiaries every year, done through a vast network of more than five lakh ration or fair price shops.
- This article discusses the details of the aspect of ration card portability.

### Why this scheme is needed?

- Until recently, there has been a location-linked benefit for ration card, leaving crores of migrant workers and families out of the food safety net.
- Each household’s ration card is linked to a specific fair price shop and can only be used to buy rations in that particular shop.
- According to data from the Census 2011, there are more than 45 crore internal migrants in India, of whom more than half have not completed primary education, while 80% have not completed secondary education. Lower levels of education are linked to lower income, which would make a large percentage of these migrants eligible for NFSA benefits.
- Four crore to ten crore people are short-term migrants, often working in cities, but not moving there permanently.
- Women who change locations after marriage also find it difficult to start accessing ration benefits using a new household’s card.
- Under the old system, beneficiaries were dependent on a single fair price shop and subject to the whims of its dealer.
- To extend these efforts into a nationwide portability network which is called the ‘One Nation One Ration Card’ scheme.

### Advantages of the scheme:

- Allowing ration card portability will curb corruption and improve access and service

quality by removing monopolies. Under the old system, beneficiaries were dependent on a single fair price shop and subject to the whims of its dealer. Under the new system, if they are denied service or face corruption or poor quality in one shop, they are free to head to a different shop.

- The scheme is also driving the faster implementation of initiatives to digitise and integrate the food storage and public distribution system.
- The scheme involves the creation of a central repository of NFSA beneficiaries and ration cards, which will integrate the existing databases maintained by States, Union Territories and the Centre.
- Aadhaar seeding is also important as the unique biometric ID will be used to authenticate and track the usage of ration by beneficiaries anywhere in the country. This will bring efficiency in the system.
- Seamless flow of online information from procurement until distribution.

### Challenges:

- Only 4.32 lakh e-PoS machines which have been installed in more than 5.3 lakh fair price shops. Hence complete coverage is difficult
- Gap comes from three States: Bihar, West Bengal and Uttarakhand. Given that they are major source States for migrants, Bihar (only 15% coverage) and West Bengal (70% coverage) must speed up ePoS installation for the system to work smoothly.
- In some rural and remote areas, ePoS connectivity also remains erratic, jeopardising smooth functioning.
- There have been widespread complaints of denial of food due to system failures. A 2017 study in Ranchi district — which was relatively well-connected — found that 20% to 40% of beneficiaries had been unable to buy their rations.
- Difference between ration benefits offered by the State in comparison to the Central entitlement. Tamil Nadu, for example, offers 20 kg of free rice per month to

almost 2 crore ration card holders, as well as subsidised sugar, pulses and oil, over and above the NFSA benefits.

- If the members of a single household are split between two different locations. The scheme's guidelines only permit purchase of half the subsidised grain at one time in an effort to prevent one member of the household taking the entire ration for the month, leaving family members in a different location stranded without food.
- Lack of any concrete data on inter-State migration trends, especially short-term migration.

#### Way forward –

- Strategies for standardizing procedures and adopting successful models of local decentralized planning for PDS, converging the system and records of different states PDS system and creating a cooperative federalism structure for independent states interaction regarding their specific needs will be an effective path to implement this ration card portability.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/what-is-ration-card-portability/article29363067.ece>

## 2) Throttled at the grassroots (The Hindu – 9<sup>th</sup> sept)

- GS Paper II – Polity and governance; local governance

#### Context –

- A closer look at the third tier of government and democratic decentralization
- Over 25 years after the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments (they mandated the establishment of panchayats and municipalities as elected local governments) devolved a range of powers and responsibilities and made them accountable to the people for their implementation.
- Devolution envisioned by the Constitution implies that precisely defined governance functions are formally assigned by law to local governments, backed by adequate transfer of a basket of financial grants and tax handles, and they are given staff so that they have the necessary wherewithal to carry out their responsibilities.

- States have formally devolved powers with respect to five core functions:

1. water supply
2. Sanitation
3. Roads and communication
4. Streetlight provision
5. Management of community assets to the gram panchayats

#### Key challenges:

- Design of funding
- Fund insufficiency
- Lack of flexibility in spending even in the case of untied grants mandated by the Union and State Finance Commissions
- Little investment in enabling and strengthening local governments to raise their own taxes and user charges
- Inadequate staff
- Irregular conduct of local elections – example
- A Supreme Court constitutional bench held that under no circumstances can postponements be allowed. Subsequently, the Supreme Court rejected other alibis for election postponement, such as delays in determining the seat reservation matrix, or fresh delimitation of local government boundaries. Yet, in Tamil Nadu, panchayat elections have not been held for over two years now, resulting in the State losing finance commission grants from the Union government.
- Conflict of roles and regulations between the centre and the state
- Local government as a machinery of centre rather than decentralization of power
- Higher rate of corruption - Decentralised corruption tends to get exposed faster than national or State-level corruption. People erroneously perceive higher corruption at the local level, simply because it is more visible.

#### What can be done?

- Gram Sabhas and wards committees in urban areas have to be revitalised. The constitutional definition of a gram sabha is that it is an association of voters. Because of our erroneous belief that the word 'sabha' means 'meeting', we try to regulate how grama sabha meetings are held and pretend that we are strengthening democracy.
- Local government organisational structures have to be strengthened. Local

governments must be enabled to hold State departments accountable and to provide quality, corruption free service to them, through service-level agreements.

- Powers to collect local taxation.
- Therefore decentralization in true sense with the above aspects would give democracy the true sense.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/throttled-at-the-grass-roots/article29369019.ece>

### 3) A controversial transfer: On Tahilramani's transfer

- GS Paper II – Constitution and polity

#### Context –

- Chief Justice Vijaya K Tahilramani resigned on Saturday after the Supreme Court Collegium declined her request for reconsideration of transfer to Meghalaya. The collegium, headed by Chief Justice Ranjan Gogoi, had recommended transfer of Justice Tahilramani, who was elevated as the high court's chief justice on August 8 last year, to the Meghalaya High Court.

#### Constitutional provisions for transfer of judges

- Article 222 in The Constitution Of India 1949
- 222. Transfer of a Judge from one High Court to another
- The President may, after consultation with the Chief Justice of India, transfer a Judge from one High Court to any other High Court
- When a Judge has been or is so transferred, he shall, during the period he serves, after the commencement of the Constitution (Fifteenth Amendment) Act, 1963, as a Judge of the other High Court, be entitled to receive in addition to his salary such compensatory allowance as may be determined by Parliament by law and, until so determined, such compensatory allowance as the President may by order fix

#### What is the debate?

- The Constitution does provide for such transfers from one high court to another, it is extremely rare that the senior-most Chief Justice in the country is shifted from a large court with a complement of 75 judges to one of the newest courts, which has strength of only three judges.

- The collegium rejected her request for reconsideration without assigning a reason. It is argued that one high court is as good as any other, that such transfers should not be seen as a 'demotion', and that the Chief Justice of India (CJI) should be free to transfer the head of any high court in the interest of "better administration of justice".
- It is possible that the transfer is based on an internal performance assessment, or complaints not available in the public domain. However, in the absence of any explanation, the bar cannot be blamed if they see the transfer as punitive. If it is performance-related, a question arises as to whether all judges are being assessed on the same criteria.

#### Criticism of collegium system

- The government and the collegium have been disagreeing frequently on the latter's recommendations for appointments.
- Judicial transfers are initiated solely at the instance of the CJI.
- The Memorandum of Procedure relating to appointments and transfers of high court judges says the opinion of the Chief Justice in this regard "is determinative".
- And in the case of a Chief Justice of a High Court, the CJI needs to take into account, "only the views of one or more knowledgeable Supreme Court Judges" while proposing a transfer.
- Opaqueness and the scope for personal opinions colouring decision-making.
- <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/819787/>
- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/a-controversial-transfer/article29377104.ece>

### 4) A minor win for India at WTO

- GS Paper II and III – international relations; economy – international institutions

#### Context-

- A World Trade Organization (WTO) panel in June accepted its claim in a dispute concerning U.S. regulations on domestic content requirement in the production of renewable energy. India had earlier lost a similar dispute over its own domestic content requirements.

#### What is the dispute?

- The dispute revolved around certain States in the U.S. that give incentives to local producers in the form of tax rebates, refunds and credits when they produce renewable energy using locally manufactured products.
- The U.S. conceded that the import from India was a 'like product'. The causal link between the incentives provided by the respective States and its effect on the Indian goods was disputed. For instance, the U.S. argued that the figures quoted by India showing a growth in the number of solar photovoltaic (PV) systems installed in Washington State between 2005 and 2015 do not support its assertion that additional incentives by themselves have induced the wide-scale adoption of locally made renewable energy products.

#### **What is the institutional arrangement?**

- Article III of the WTO's General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) requires that countries do not provide less favourable treatment to 'like products' originating from other nations. For instance, a solar photovoltaic cell manufactured in the U.S. should be liable to the same amount of tax as one made anywhere else in the world.

#### **How does the WTO determine whether an item is a 'like product'?**

- Criteria pertain to the:
  1. product's end use
  2. composition
  3. substitutability
  4. consumer preferences
  5. Tariff classifications.

#### **WTO's ruling**

- The WTO panel rejected US's argument, stating instead that Washington State's additional incentive accords an advantage on the use of local products not available for 'like imported products'. India, the panel held, was not required to prove factually that the rise in the production of PV systems was caused by a rise in the production of upstream local products at the cost of 'like-imported products'. The 'mere incentivisation' of only the local products was sufficient to make a prima facie case that Washington State's additional incentive affected the sale, purchase, transportation, distribution or use of the relevant products.

#### **Implication -**

- The other disputes pending between the countries at the WTO involving the export promotion scheme brought in by India and the imposition of excess customs duty on steel and aluminium by the U.S. this will lead to further trade easing and add to the revival of global economic growth and handle the trade war scenario, deinstitutionalization of WTO etc. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-minor-win-for-india-at-wto/article29376593.ece>

### **5. Factoring in safety**

- GS Paper III - economy; employment, industries, human resource

#### **Context -**

- Fire at the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation gas facility in Navi Mumbai, the tragedy that killed nearly two dozen people at a firecracker factory in Batala, Punjab. The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2019, introduced in the Lok Sabha in July to combine 13 existing laws relating to mines, factories, dock workers, building and construction, transport workers, inter-State migrant labour. All these events bring to issue of industrial safety to the forefront.

#### **The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2019**

- The Code applies to establishments employing at least 10 workers, and to all mines and docks. It does not apply to apprentices. Further, it makes special provisions for certain types of establishments and classes of employees, such as factories, mines, and building and construction workers. The Code repeals and replaces 13 labour laws relating to safety, health and working conditions. These include the Factories Act, 1948, the Mines Act, 1952, and the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970.

#### **Challenges:**

- Making work environments safer is a low priority, although the productivity benefits of such investments have always been clear. The consequences are frequently seen in the form of a large number of fatalities and injuries, but in a market that has a steady supply of labour, policymakers tend to ignore the wider impact of such losses.

- There is little attention to sector specific requirements
- Formation of safety committees and appointment of safety officers, the latter in the case of establishments with 500 workers, is left to the discretion of State governments.
- Conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO) covering organised and unorganised sector workers' safety, including the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 has not been ratified.

#### Way forward

- There is a need for systemic reform by taking fresh inputs from seasoned parliamentarians, employees, employers and industrial experts including lawyers. Industries using hazardous processes and chemicals need special attention. The 2019 Code must have clear definitions, specifying limits of exposure for workers. The government must collectively work for a safer environment for workers and must prepare a robust disaster plan for safety and rehabilitation of workers in case of major accidents like Bhopal Gas Tragedy.
- <https://www.prsindia.org/billtrack/occupational-safety-health-and-working-conditions-code-2019>
- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/factoring-in-safety/article29385927.ece>

### 6) One year after 'Navtej Johar', imagining an equality law (The Hindu - 11<sup>th</sup> sept)

- GS Paper II - constitution and polity; equality; liberty; rights etc.

#### Context -

- One year of Judgment in Navtej Singh Johar v Union of India, the
- Article highlights that there is a need for an overarching legislation for an Equality law in India.

#### The Navtej Singh Johar Case

- The Supreme Court of India unanimously held that *Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, which criminalized 'carnal intercourse against the order of nature', was unconstitutional* in so far as it criminalized consensual sexual conduct

between adults of the same sex. The petition, filed by dancer Navtej Singh Johar, challenged Section 377 of the Penal Code on the ground that it violated the constitutional rights to privacy, freedom of expression, equality, human dignity and protection from discrimination. With this, the Court overruled its decision in *Suresh Koushal v. Naz Foundation* that had upheld the constitutionality of Section 377.

- The Court reasoned that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation was violative of the right to equality, that criminalizing consensual sex between adults in private was violative of the right to privacy, that sexual orientation forms an inherent part of self-identity and denying the same would be violative of the right to life, and that fundamental rights cannot be denied on the ground that they only affect a minuscule section of the population.
- Various laws and judgements broadly surrounding equality and rights and issues unaddressed:
  1. The Court relied upon its decision in *National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India* (( National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India, (2014) 5 SCC 438 )) to reiterate that gender identity is intrinsic to one's personality and denying the same would be violative of one's dignity [p. 156, para. 253(i)].
  2. The Court relied upon its decision in *K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India* and held that denying the LGBT community its right to privacy on the ground that they form a minority of the population would be violative of their fundamental rights.
  3. The judgment in the *Joseph Shine* case decriminalising adultery (2018)
  4. Judgment in the Sabarimala case recognising the rights of women to enter religious shrines (2018)
  5. Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 - this only addresses discrimination against persons with disabilities in the public sector and does not address the private sector.
  6. Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 - do not provide civil remedies of injunctions or damages for acts of discrimination.
  7. Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955

8. Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 - this is limited to sexual harassment at work.

9. Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019 - addresses only transgender and intersex persons' rights and there is severe criticism of this Bill. The rights of equality and non-discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation are not covered under this Bill.

#### **A comprehensive equality law – need of the hour**

- An overarching legislation that guarantees equality to all persons on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, sex, caste, religion, age, disability, marital status, pregnancy, nationality and other grounds.
- The law to define what equality would encompass.
- The law should impose obligations of equality and non-discrimination on all persons, public and private, and in the areas of education, employment, healthcare, land and housing and access to public places.
- It should provide for civil remedies including injunctions to stop discriminatory behaviour, costs and damages, and positive action to make reparations.
- Therefore The essence of the privacy judgment in *K.S. Puttuswamy v. Union of India* (2017) that equality and liberty cannot be separated, and equality encompasses the inclusion of dignity and basic freedoms has to be carefully knitted into this broad law which will take care of the above discussed issues.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/one-year-after-navtej-johar-imagining-an-equality-law/article29385200.ece>
- <https://globalfreedomofexpression.columbia.edu/cases/navtej-singh-johar-v-union-india/>

#### **7. A case for a differential global carbon tax (The Hindu – 12<sup>th</sup> sept)**

- GS Paper II & III – environment; environmental diplomacy

#### **Context:**

- The most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report suggests that we, as humankind, might have just over a decade left to limit global warming. The IPCC says total global emissions will need to fall by 45% from 2010 levels by 2030 and reach net zero by 2050.
- If these targets are not met, tropical regions of the world, which are densely populated and happen to be mainly concentrated in the global South, are likely to be most negatively affected because of their low altitudes and pre-existing high temperatures. Therefore climate change being a global problem requires a global solution.

#### **Sharing the burden:**

- There is huge mismatch between the global south and global north in terms of their emissions and the subsequent vulnerability and damage. The north has contributed majorly to the emissions but the south is bearing the brunt of it.
- A genuine global consensus on the mitigation of this problem is not evolving.
- The burden of adjustment cannot be equal when the underlying relationship between the two worlds has been historically unequal (climate injustice funnel)

#### **What is the just sharing?**

- A Just Energy Transition (JET), is premised on a sense of global justice in terms of climatic fallouts and the respective contributions of the countries. It will also help the resource-poor developing countries to make the energy transition without having to worry about the finances unduly. Instead, the current experiences of the developing countries point to the contrary.

#### **How to correct the injustice?**

- Fundamentally change the energy infrastructure, which requires massive investments for the green energy programme across the world.
- Funding arrangement - those on the top of the funnel, apart from funding their own energy transition, partially support the transition for the countries at the bottom and this sharing of the burden of development be done in a way which inverts this injustice funnel.
- Countries have to spend around 1.5% of their GDP.

### Global carbon tax

- The global energy transition is to be financed through a system of the global carbon tax. Since the total global carbon emissions are 36.1 billion metric tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, this amounts to a global carbon tax of \$46.1 per metric tonne.
- Those countries which emit more than the global per capita average pay for their own transition plus fund a part of the energy transition of those who are below this average. So, those at the receiving end of climate injustice are duly compensated for even as the entire world transitions to greener earth as a result of this process of carbon tax sharing.
- The global average of carbon emissions is 4.97 metric tonne per capita. All the countries with emissions above this level (68 in all) are “payers” to finance energy transition for ‘beneficiary’ countries (135 in number), which are emitting below this level.
- Moreover the proportion of the amount which is to be paid or received will be based on their distance from the global average and will control for their population size.
- Once we subtract the carbon compensation amount from each of these countries, we get the effective carbon tax for that country.
- The two top „payer“ countries in terms of absolute amounts of transfers are the U.S. and China since their emissions are higher than the global average.
- In terms of „compensated“ countries, India comes at the top due to its population size and its distance from the global emissions“ average (India has per capita emissions of 1.73 metric tonne).
- **Robinhood Tax:** The other countries in the beneficiary list are all countries from the global South, but this list also has a few developed countries like France, Sweden, and Switzerland. This shows that this policy is just, as merely developed countries are not being asked to shoulder the burden.
- Countries like France etc. are developed however since their per capita emissions are low, They are the beneficiaries of this globally-just policy. All nations have to climb down the emissions ladder without

necessarily having to give up on their of living. It's a global green Robin Hood tax!<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-case-for-a-differential-global-carbon-tax/article29394220.ece>

### 8) Futile fines

- GS Paper II – polity and governance; motor vehicle amendment act

#### Context –

- The steep penalties for violation of road rules that came into force on September 1 under the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act, 2019 have produced a backlash, with several State governments opting to reduce the quantum of fines, or even to reject the new provisions. Gujarat has announced a substantial reduction in the fines, West Bengal has refused to adopt the higher penalties, Karnataka and Kerala are studying the prospects to make the provisions less stringent, and others are proceeding with caution.
- The question that has arisen is whether enhanced fines can radically change this record when other determinants, beginning with administrative reform, remain untouched.

#### Advantages of the new amendment:

- New provisions are being made to simplify third party insurance claims and settlement process.
- Stricter penalties for offences by juveniles, higher compensation for hit and run cases, improved process for registration of new vehicles – these are some of the key features of the Motor Vehicle (Amendment) act. These help in behaviour modification
- Issues that relate to improving road safety and citizens' ease and facilitation while dealing with the Transport Department is addressed.
- Last mile connectivity, public transport, strengthening rural transport, automation and computerization, enabling online services are some of the other areas.
- The core of reform lies in Section 198(A) of the amended law, which requires any designated authority, contractor, consultant or concessionaire responsible for design or construction or maintenance of the safety standards of the road to meet

those laid down by the Central government.

- This provision, which prescribes a penalty for a violation leading to death or disability, can be enforced through litigation by road users in all State

#### Way forward

- Infrastructure should meet legal requirements, fines and enforcement action are naturally liable to be challenged in courts; the condition of roads, traffic signals, signage and cautionary markings which affect motorists, cyclists and pedestrians, would all fall within its ambit.
- State governments reform their Regional Transport Authorities. The Transport Ministry could well have made electronic delivery of RTO services. Ultimately, ending the culture of impunity that allows government vehicles and VIPs to ignore road rules will encourage the average citizen to follow them. the National Road Safety Board could recommend important changes to infrastructure and to enable professional accident investigation.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/futile-fines-on-traffic-violation-penalties/article29402364.ece>

### 9) Bane of banners

- GS Paper II – polity and governance

#### Context –

- A banner put up on a road divider by a functionary of a political party to celebrate a wedding fell on a young woman riding a two-wheeler, sending her off-balance and under a tanker lorry.
- The recent death of a girl in Chennai over hoarding fall has highlighted the broad perspective of the issue of accidents and law enforcement along with right infrastructure development. It is important to find solution not mere by fines and behaviour modification by a whole ecosystem of good governance.

#### The high court ruling

- two years ago, the Madras High Court had ruled in a case that “the erection of arches, placards and display boards, banners with poles, etc., abutting into public streets and pavements, which obstruct free and safe movement of traffic or free and safe movement of pedestrians or obstructs visibility of drivers is patently illegal.

#### What needs to be done?

- Need to highlight the issue of public safety
- Strict law enforcement in governance issues.
- Fixing accountability over the agencies with the responsibility of public safety
- Deterrence in behaviour of rash driving
- Road infrastructure has to be enhanced
- Considering the long history of illegal political banners and religious displays, often involving theft of electricity, the court can bring about compliance with the law through a special panel, similar to the Supreme Court’s committee on road safety headed by a retired judge. Strong action is needed against lumpen groups who use banners as displays of power or fealty.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/bane-of-banners/article29411221.ece>

### 10. A milestone in greater transparency and accountability

- GS Paper II – polity and governance

#### Context –

- The Jan Soochna Portal (JSP) launched by the government of Rajasthan is a remarkable achievement in furtherance of the right to information (RTI) — especially Section 4 of the RTI Act — that deals with proactive disclosure of information.
- This will be in compliance with the Section 4(2) of the RTI Act mandating the public authorities to disclose information in the public domain, so that the people need not file applications under the law to obtain information.

#### RTI act, 2005

- An Act to provide for setting out the practical regime of right to information for citizens to secure access to information under the control of public authorities, in order to promote transparency and accountability in the working of every public authority, the constitution of a Central Information Commission and State Information Commissions and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- This act is in line with the fundamental right to life and liberty which will subsume right to information.

#### The portal and its benefits:

- The portal will provide information pertaining to 13 departments on a single platform.
- With different sections divided into districts, blocks and panchayats, the portal empowers the common people with access to useful information.
- The State government will set up information kiosks in village panchayats and self-service e-mitra centres in the towns to enable the people to access the information useful for them.
- The information pertaining to the number of beneficiaries of schemes, works undertaken in different areas, land records and social security pensions will be available on the portal.
- This helps move the information system paradigm from MIS (Management Information System), which caters to the needs of the government 'line' departments, by providing information by sector, to a JIS (Janata Information System) where the information is provided by geography (panchayat), across sectors, since the community is interested in knowing about the work being done holistically.
- Transparency must be accompanied by accountability, and that is where the JSP has great value and significance since it places the power of making the State government accountable to everyone who accesses the information made available on the portal.
- Details of every activity of the government such as availability of food grains and ration shops and their distribution, implementation of various schemes and their beneficiaries and a variety of other information are available on a real-time basis virtually making it a Janta Information System.
- The portal would eventually turn out to be an effective medium for “digital dialogue” with the people as well as a strong instrument for ensuring transparency in governance.
- With the use of technology and digitisation of records and information, this information is made freely available on the JSP. To this extent, there is no need for anyone to take recourse to the RTI Act and

await a response. All information can be accessed immediately, free of cost.

#### Examples –

- As the information is available on the Internet, every citizen will be able to access that. For example, the government of Rajasthan, like some other States, has waived farmers' loans. The portal gives the details of every farmer in every bank branch whose loans have been waived, along with the amounts. Further Illegal mining has been a major issue in different parts of the country, with people unable to determine the details of clearances given. This portal gives the list of mines in every district, provides geographical coordinates, and the area where mining has been permitted, including the land deed identifiers. It also provides details about pollution and environment clearances. Finally, the portal provides details of production and royalties and taxes paid. This kind of information can facilitate a progressive partnership between government and citizens for a cleaner society.

#### Challenges:

- There are huge challenges with regard to maintenance issues and ensuring that there is no let-up in the availability of information.
- Cyber security threats have to be taken care of.
- Digital divide
- Lack of awareness among citizens
- Developing systems which will support the information for example lack of legal mechanisms for enforcing accountability.

#### The Rajasthan model for these challenges

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- Draft guidelines have been framed for the development and maintenance of the JSP. Once implemented, this will ensure that the information system continues uninterrupted.
- Various departments of the government of Rajasthan, called Line Departments, have been given a set of obligations that they are expected to fulfil.
- For example, they are expected to ensure digitization of records. In addition, the Department of Information Technology will serve as the nodal department for the

development, operationalization and maintenance of the JSP.

- This department has been informed of its obligations, which includes adherence to the norms and standards laid down by a digital dialogue advisory group.
  - To ensure that the responsibilities are carried out, the advisory group will be the monitoring agency. Grievance redressal officers will be appointed so that citizens can make the State government truly accountable.
  - The government of Rajasthan has also taken steps to train citizens so that they are aware of the facilities available.
  - It has been decided to host the JSP in decentralized locations, right down to the municipal ward and panchayats levels.
- They will have access to welfare schemes, revenue activities such as mining, and other service delivery issues such as health and education.
  - Henceforth all other State governments could follow the Rajasthan government's initiative, which aims to make people, including the marginalized sections, a part of the governance process.
  - <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/a-milestone-in-greater-transparency-accountability/article29411242.ece>
  - <https://rti.gov.in/rti-act.pdf>
  - <https://itforchange.net/jana-suchana-portal-rajasthan>

# RSTV Big Picture

## 1) Measures to boost economy

### CONTEXT –

- Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Saturday announced a fresh set of relief measures, this time to boost exports and the flagging housing sector.
- FM Sitharaman announced two major measures. The first one is a new export promotion scheme for the remission of duties or taxes on export products. This scheme will completely replace Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS) and Rebate of State Levies (ROSL).
- The second announcement is the set-up of a Rs 10,000 crore special fund, a special window for affordable and mid-income housing. The fund will provide the last-mile funding for housing projects that are non-NPA and non-NCLT projects and are stuck due to lack of funding.

### ANALYSIS –

- The Export Promotion Schemes are a welcome move as high export affects the growth rate substantially.
- Export Issues – Administrative reforms which have been taken up are needed and aim at addressing the structural issues at hand, by smoothening the frictions to ease the progress of business and deployment of funds.
- India is not an export-led country and hence, its exports mainly depend on the international factors. As a result of the shallowness in international markets, in terms of funds and other factors like effect of GST on Small industry exporters, The Exports are facing a low.
- The new measures taken up by the finance ministry lay stress on loans in Housing Sector, Tax Framework etc.
- Countries like Singapore, Africa and UAE organise mega mall fairs to promote different Products regularly through the years. India's Annual Mega Shopping Festival initiative, in this regard, helps by including sectors like artisans and weavers.

- There is also a push increase the Port efficiency by bringing in competitiveness between ports.

### CHALLENGES –

- India is in a financial slow down, caused due to structural and cyclical reasons – structural being – the amendments to bankruptcy code and the increased the focus on black money, which is pushing for less cash. Other behavioural and technological factors impact to, like the environmental factors which are to be considered for any developmental activity now. Also, the increasing importance of Electric Vehicles.
- Cyclical reasons are the monetary policy transmission mechanism problems which can take time to translate into actual growth trends.
- Housing Sector of India is highly unorganised. For Example, 9% of Indian Housing purchases is by mortgages and the remaining 90% of housing demand is by other factors. The Measures announced on the incomplete projects which are at the last leg of completion are necessary.
- Agriculture, Manufacturing (particularly, Small Industry) and Corporate Investment need more long term measures which are the need of the hour more than anything.
- A Special Window to provide last mile funding for housing projects which are non- NPA and non-NCLT Projects in affordable and middle income category to be set up.
- Monitoring these aspects through inter-ministerial committees will help in tracking the developmental progress.

### Way Forward-

- Release the stuck Government payments and stalled projects worth lakhs of crores will help in fixing few Lags quickly.
- Construction of Railway lines is leading the Infrastructural push presently, that is an average 11.2 km of railway line per day is being laid down.
- Recognise the deeper structural issues to increase exports because, Export led

backward Integration is the way to higher growth.

- Deeper analysis on the reasons behind stagnation of exports, like coherence between government ministries, finance, commerce and external affairs should be undertaken. Issues on housing loans and asset liability mismatch.
- Other Aspects like 70% agricultural output not having any marketing support system. Impact of GST on small Industry was much deeper than it is appreciated. They are also a big contributor to the export scenario.
- The 5% growth should be felt by the common population, which can in turn boost the consumer spending going forward.

## 2) Operation clean-up

### CONTEXT -

- In the run-up to the 2019 general election, unlike in 2014, the issue of corruption took a back seat; it was overshadowed by the issue of national security.
- Over the last few months several steps were taken to clean up the system. In the beginning of June, the government dismissed from service 12 senior income tax officers, including one of the rank of joint commissioner, on charges of corruption and professional misconduct. A week later twelve Indian Revenue Service (IRS) officers belonging to the income tax (I-T) department were dismissed on charges of corruption.

### ANALYSIS - CORRUPTION IN BUREAUCRACY

- There have been complaints on the Tax Terrorism, i.e Officials enforcing the Law enforcement and income tax officers acting in their own interests from the public, business and industry circles.
- State Sales tax department officials are an example of this with a predatory approach. Hence, a check on the enforcement agencies and their ethical quotient is a necessary initiative.
- A Deeper and long term measure would be to motivate and incentivise the Public servants about their work, and contribution to the society and Governance.
- Penalties and Closer supervision on officials, along with judicial intervention

which is more effective and expeditious are also steps to be taken.

- Furthermore in the existing system, the factors like not having a mechanism in which Good conduct is incentivised through a process driven system is a major hurdle in ensuring transparent working culture
- Presently, Legislation of the country changed from a discussion to a rule based decision making system. For example - IBC and GST which promote compliance and resolution of issues in a transparent manner.

### CHALLENGES -

- Coercive and collusive actions are two types which result in corruption. The coercive led corruption has not been properly tackled, while the collusive led corruption has been targeted effectively.
- By moving into a form of faceless governance model, the government can ensure the control on the above types of corruption. The Income tax Department has been taking steps in this direction.
- Agreements with Other countries in the past years regarding transaction of information about financial assets also has been a major whip against such activities.
- Regarding the measures against Tax Havens, simplifying the Tax laws, while taking due care of loop holes and arbitrary clauses will be helpful.
- At the Higher level corruption (i.e, financial corruption) - Simpler laws, Easy Information availability within the country and across the border will better target it.
- At the Cutting edge level (i.e Common man level) - Proper Conduct of business across all levels in police, revenue etc, Ethical training, technological interventions and reduction of discretionary powers should be employed.
- There is a Fine line between avoidance and evasion and technological tools should be able to capture it and work in the grey area.

### WAY FORWARD-

- 3 areas to be addressed -First, rates of taxation should be moderate, which can ensure compliance. It would promote compliance more rather than with higher taxation with lots of exemptions.

- Separation of responsibilities between officials who collect taxes and officials undertaking investigation should be a core aspect of the Enforcement agencies.
- Role of regulation and enforcement is very crucial and should be enhanced.
- Direct tax code which is forward looking.
- Governance reforms across police, judiciary and municipality should be a continuous process to develop a culture, which is transparent, honest and accountable.
- Improve accountability standards, i.e. good accountable norms, which includes political or administrative accountability will result in holistic and trustworthy ecosystem.

### 3) India's Far East policy

#### CONTEXT -

- During his just concluded visit to Russia, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the 'Act Far East' policy to boost India's engagement with Russia's Far East region.
- He announced an unprecedented 1 billion dollar line of credit for the development of Russia's Far East, asserting that India will support Russia's vision for developing the resource-rich region.
- While addressing the plenary session of the 5th Eastern Economic Forum as the chief guest, Prime Minister Modi expressed confidence that this step will add a new chapter in our economic diplomacy. And in this context, he expressed confidence that the Indian diaspora will make an active contribution towards the progress of Russia's Far East region.

#### INDIA'S BENEFITS -

- Russia's Far-east region is rich in resources. To promote the region, over the last few years Russia has developed attractive policies to attract Asian powers for collaboration.
- Due to the China factor and its dominance in the landscape, the Far-east becomes an even more of a crucial move for Russia to diversify partnerships with nations. Russia, hence intends to leverage the Far-east to strengthen its position in the Asia-pacific Region.
- From the Indian Perspective, Far-east is a new concept, which is very beneficial for

its economy, as India is a growing economy and needs resource hungry. It also helps in deepening the Indo-Russian ties. The Potential for Investment is present across wide range of sectors from Agriculture to diamond cutting and polishing.

#### ECONOMIC AND STRATEGIC ASPECTS-

- The New Indo-Russian Far-east policy is a carefully crafted strategy to diversify and deepen India's energy security. It attains importance in the face of uncertainty in the middle-east and the political turmoil in countries like Venezuela.
- The Policy also highlights a risk-taking appetite of India, because of its efforts in Gas Explorations and Collaborative projects to share the risk.
- The Proposed Shipping line between Vladivostok and Chennai can help in actually accessing the resources and having a physical infrastructure in place.
- There has also been talk of export of skilled manpower from India to Russia, which can promote skilled workmanship, other than IT, in specific areas like diamond cutting, processing etc.
- The policy represents India's intent to re-quantify the relationship with Russia and diversify in economical aspect. Russia's Asia-pacific approach could be at logger-heads with India's Indo-pacific approach, however broader convergence should be on the results which can come out of the collaboration for practical problems rather than the above approaches.
- The sanctions on Russia would probably not be a major hurdle, as the projects are not strategic in nature. However, if the line of credit is commercial, it might result in few issues.

#### CONCLUSION-

- Lastly, If India's investment increases in the Far-east region of Russia, it enhances the Indian profile in a strategic region. It benefits India in both ways that is geo-strategic and bilateral.