

# OFFICERS' Pulse

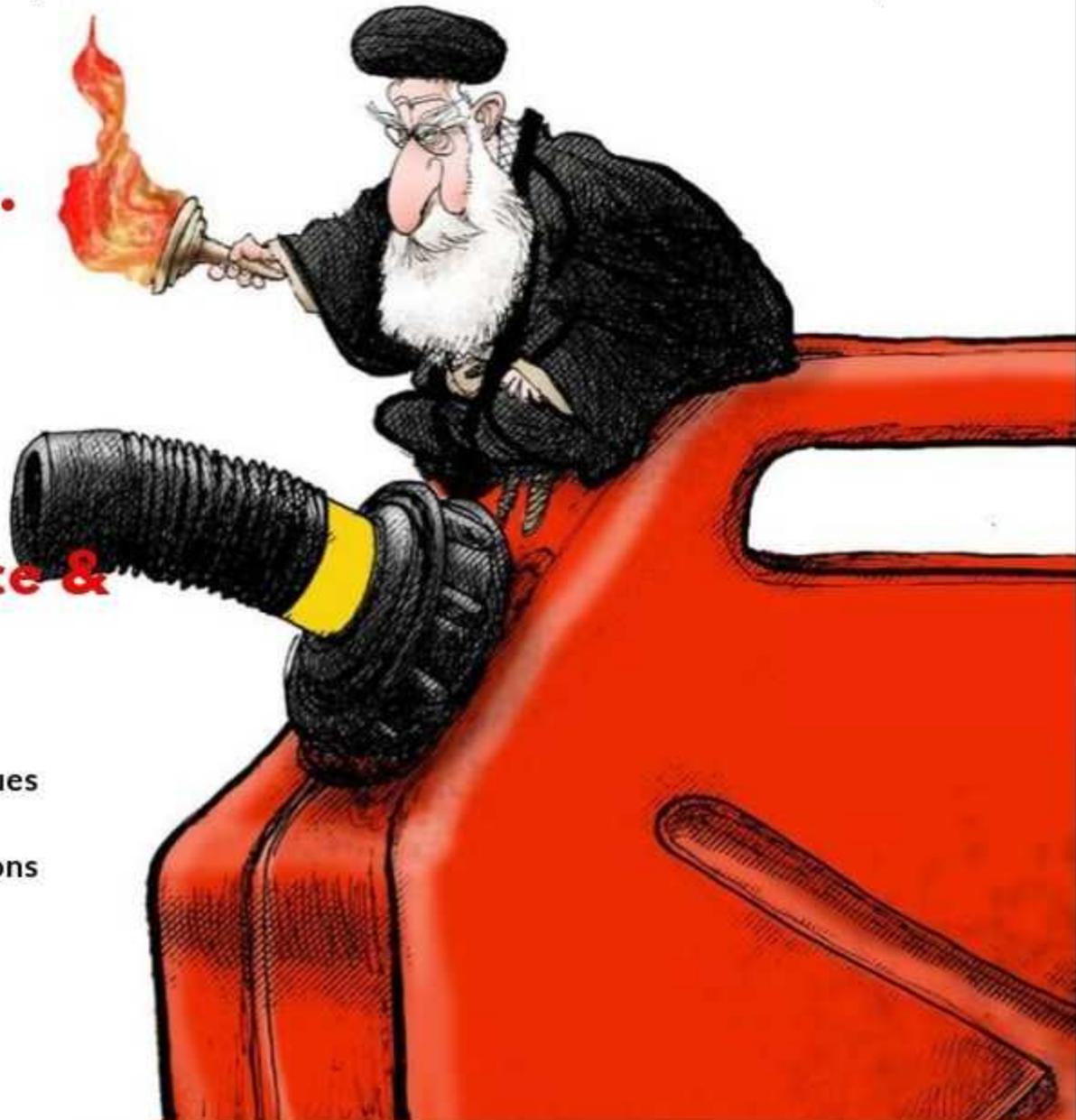
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## Coverage.

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 TIPS.



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# News @ a glance

## POLITY

### 1) Government-funded NGOs come under RTI ambit, says SC

- GS Paper II – Polity and governance; non-government organizations, right to information

#### Context –

- The Supreme Court held in a judgment that Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) “substantially” financed by the government fall within the ambit of the Right to Information Act.

#### Scope of the judgement

- NGOs which receive considerable finances from the government or are essentially dependent on the government fall under the category of “public authority” defined in Section 2(h) of the Right to Information (RTI) Act of 2005.

#### What is a public authority?

- The RTI Act defines “public authorities” in Section 2(h) –
  - A “public authority” means any authority or body or institution of self- government established or constituted –
    - (i) by or under the Constitution;
    - (ii) by any other law made by Parliament;
    - (iii) by any other law made by State Legislature;
    - (iv) by notification issued or order made by the appropriate Government, and includes any –
      - (v) body owned, controlled or substantially financed;
      - (vi) Non-Government organization substantially financed, directly or indirectly by funds provided by the appropriate Government.
  - An NGO may also include societies which are neither owned nor controlled by the government, but if they are significantly funded by the government, directly or indirectly, they come under the RTI Act.

- Substantial proportion need not necessarily be 50% and above government funding but could be assets like government land, heavy discounts to hospitals etc.

#### Impact –

- They have to disclose vital information, ranging from finances to hierarchy to decisions to functioning, to citizens who apply under RTI.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/govt-funded-ngos-come-under-rti-ambit-says-sc/article29444279.ece>

### 2) Cabinet approves ban on e-cigarettes

- GS Paper: Polity and governance; public health

#### Context –

- The Union cabinet has made the manufacture, import, sale, distribution and advertisements of e-cigarettes a cognizable offence.

#### The Prohibition of E-cigarettes Ordinance, 2019

- Upon promulgation of the ordinance, any production, manufacturing, import, export, transport, sale (including online sale), distribution or advertisement (including online advertisement) of e-cigarettes shall be a cognisable offence imprisonment of up to one year, or fine up to ₹1 lakh, or both for the first offence; and imprisonment of up to three years and fine up to ₹5 lakh for a subsequent offence.
- Storage of electronic-cigarettes shall also be punishable with imprisonment of up to 6 months or a fine of up to ₹50,000 or both.
- Owners of existing stocks of e-cigarettes on the date of commencement of the ordinance will have to *suo motu* declare

and deposit these with the nearest police station.

- The sub-inspector has been designated as the authorised officer to take action under the ordinance. The Central or State governments may also designate any other equivalent officer(s) as authorised officer for enforcement of the provisions of the ordinance.

#### **What is E-Cigarette ?**

- E-cigarettes are battery-operated devices that produce aerosol by heating a solution containing nicotine, which is the addictive substance in combustible cigarettes

#### **Why has it been banned?**

- Chemicals used in e-cigarettes as solvents are hazardous and could be fatal.
- E-cigarettes and similar technologies that encourage tobacco are hazardous for an active as well as passive user.
- Pure nicotine, the main ingredient of e-cigarettes, and its chemical derivatives in extracted chemical form are highly addictive and poisonous and have a potential to cause death even in small quantities.
- E-cigarette sales have risen 77% because of consumption by students.
- Vaping increases the risk of children getting addicted to this tobacco substitute.
- Use of e-cigarettes could have adverse effects on humans, which include DNA damage, carcinogenic, cellular, molecular and immunological toxicity, respiratory, cardiovascular and neurological disorders, and adverse impact on foetal development and pregnancy.

#### **Previous measures –**

- The Union Health Ministry had earlier issued an advisory to all States and Union Territories to ensure that Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS), e-cigarettes, heat-not-burn devices, vape, e-sheesha, e-nicotine flavoured hookah, and devices that enable nicotine delivery are not sold (including online sale), manufactured, distributed, traded, imported and advertised in their jurisdictions.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/cabinet-decides-to-ban-e-cigarettes/article29448257.ece>  
<https://www.livemint.com/>

### **3) Two out of three child deaths due to malnutrition: report**

- GS Paper II – Social issues; health; malnutrition; governance
- The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health by the India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative finds that:
  - Two-thirds of the 1.04 million deaths in children under five years in India are attributable to malnutrition, according to the first comprehensive estimate of disease burden due to child and maternal malnutrition and the trends of its indicators in every State from 1990.
  - The disability-adjusted life year (DALY) rate attributable to malnutrition in children varies 7-fold among the States and is highest in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Assam, followed by Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Nagaland and Tripura.
  - Overall under-five death rate and the death rate due to malnutrition has decreased substantially from 1990 to 2017, but malnutrition is still the leading risk factor for death in children under five years, and is also the leading risk factor for disease burden for all ages considered together in most States.
  - Low birth weight in India as it is the biggest contributor to child death among all malnutrition indications and its rate of decline is among the lowest.
  - Overweight among a subset of children is becoming a significant public health problem as it is increasing rapidly across all States.
- India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative is a joint initiative of the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), Public Health Foundation of India, and Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

#### **Way forward –**

- An integrated nutrition policy to effectively address the broader determinants of under-nutrition across the life cycle.
- Focus will be needed on major determinants like provision of clean

drinking water, reducing rates of open defecation

- Improving women's educational status
- Reducing material mortality and achieving good maternal health indicators like institutional deliveries.
- Universal immunization
- Food fortification and other nutritive supplements in anganwadi.
- Food and nutrition security for the most vulnerable families
- Real time monitoring of Poshan Abhiyan and attaining **Kuposhan mukt Bharat**.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/health/two-out-of-three-child-deaths-due-to-malnutrition-report/article29453193.ece>

#### 4) Poshan Abhiyaan targets are aspirational: Study

- GS Paper II – Social issues; health; nutrition security

##### Context –

- As per a new study published in Lancet, India is unlikely to meet its target under national Nutrition Mission or Poshan Abhiyaan. The report is a joint initiative of Indian Council of Medical Research, Public Health Foundation of India (PHFI) and the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

##### The study observed:

- India is unlikely to meet targets set under the ambitious Poshan Abhiyaan for reduction in prevalence of stunting, underweight, low birth weight and anaemia in women and children by 2022 if there is no progress achieved in improving the rate of decline observed between 1990 and 2017.
- India will miss its target for stunting levels of 25% by 9.6%; underweight target of 22.7% by 4.8%; desired low birth level of 11.4% by 8.9%; anaemia level among women of 39.4% by 13.8%; and anaemia level among **children** of 44.7% by 11.7%, according to the Global Burden of Disease Study 1990-2017.
- The slow pace of improvement needs to be accelerated, so that future prevalence of the malnutrition indicators is better than our projections based on trends so far.

##### Poshan Abhiyan

- Poshan Abhiyaan, the world's largest nutrition programme, expected to benefit 10 crore people and launched in 2018, aims to reduce stunting, underweight, and low birth weight, each by 2% per year; and anaemia among young children, adolescents and women each by 3% per year until 2022. A special target for stunting is set at 25% by 2022.

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/nutritional-targets-under-poshan-abhiyaan-aspirational-study/article29461250.ece>

#### 5) India is the top source of immigrants across the globe

- GS Paper II – Polity and governance; citizenship; social issues; migration; human geography

##### Context –

- NRC issue, Rohingya Crisis, Yemen conflict
- India has emerged as the leading country of origin for immigrants across the world, with 17.5 million international migrants in 2019 coming from India, up from 15.9 million in 2015, according to a dataset released by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs.
- The International Migrant Stock 2019 (released by the UN DESA's Population Division)
- The number of international migrants in the world had reached an estimated 272 million 2019 — 51 million more than in 2010.
- The percentage of international migrants of the total global population has increased to 3.5% from 2.8% in 2000.
- India remained as the top source of international migrants; the number of migrants living in India saw a slight decline from 5.24 million in 2015 to an estimated 5.15 million in 2019 – both 0.4% of the total population of the country.
- one-third of all international migrants originated from 10 countries — after India, Mexico ranked second as the country of origin for 12 million migrants, followed by China (11 million), Russia (10 million) and Syria (8 million).

- The European region hosted the highest number of the immigrants at 82 million in 2019, followed by North America (59 million) and Northern Africa and Western Asia (49 million)
- The U.S. hosts the highest number of international migrants (51 million), about 19% of the global population.
- Around two-fifths of all international migrants had gone from one developing country to another.
- Forced displacements continue to rise, with the number of refugees and asylum seekers increased by about 13 million from 2010 to 2017.

### What is Migration?

- Migration in geography usually refers to the movement of humans from one place to another. It occurs when the perceived interaction of Push and Pull factors overcome the friction of moving.
- Push factors: elements of the origin that are perceived negatively leading to a desire to leave.
- Pull factors: elements of the destination that are perceived positively leading to place-attraction.

### Net Migration:

- The sum change in migrant numbers between those coming into an area (in-migrants) and those leaving (out-migrants). If migration crosses international borders a person is an Emigrant from the country they leave and an Immigrant to the country they are going to.
- <https://www.tutor2u.net/geography/reference/introduction-to-migration>
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-is-the-top-source-of-immigrants-across-the-globe/article29452221.ece>

## 6) Access to the Internet is a basic right, says Kerala High Court

- GS Paper II – Polity and Governance; constitution; fundamental rights

### Context –

- The Kerala High Court on Thursday held that the right to have access to the **Internet** is part of the fundamental right to education as well as the right to privacy under **Article 21** of the Constitution. This was in response to the petition filed by a college student challenging her expulsion for not adhering to restrictions on the use of mobile phone.
- The court observed, “When the Human Rights Council of the United Nations has found that the right of access to Internet is a fundamental freedom and a tool to ensure right to education, a rule or instruction which impairs the said right of the students cannot be permitted to stand in the eye of law.”
- The Judge observed that the action of the college authorities infringed the fundamental freedom as well as privacy and would adversely affect the future and career of students who want to acquire knowledge and compete with their peers, such restriction could not be permitted to be enforced.
- **Supreme Court** in the S.Rangarajan and others v. P. Jagjivan Ram (1989) case said t “the fundamental freedom under **Article 19(1)(a)** can be reasonably restricted only for the purposes mentioned in Article 19(2) and the restriction must be justified on the anvil of necessity and not the quicksand of convenience or expediency.”
- The court further said that college authorities as well as parents should be conscious of the fact that the students in a college hostel are adults capable of taking decisions as to how and when they have to study.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/technology/internet/access-to-internet-is-a-basic-right-says-kerala-high-court/article29462339.ece>

# ENVIRONMENT

## 1) BAN PARAQUAT; SAVE LIFE

### Why in news?

- Doctors in Odisha's Burla district demanded the government to ban paraquat, a herbicide which killed as many as 170 lives in last two years.

### About Paraquat:

- Paraquat is a toxic chemical that is widely used as an herbicide (plant killer), primarily for weed and grass control.
- There is no antidote to this herbicide
- The consumers complain of kidney, liver and lung problems.
- Recovery from kidney problems is seen but some die of lung- and liver-related ailments.
- Paraquat has been banned in 32 countries including Switzerland, where herbicide producing company Sygenta is based.
- So far in India, only Kerala has banned the herbicide.

### Background:

- Pesticide Action Network (PAN), a civil society group, came up with a report on paraquat usage in India in 2015.
- It said paraquat dichloride is being used for 25 crops in India, whereas it is approved to be used on only nine crops by the Central Insecticide Board and Registration Committee. This is a violation of the Indian Insecticides Act.
- Since farmers can't and don't read the label on paraquat containers, retailers sell paraquat in plastic carry bags and refill bottles which seems to be another violation.
- Paraquat also figures on the list of 99 pesticides and herbicides activist Kavitha Kuruganti is requesting the Supreme Court to ban in an ongoing case.
- The mortality rate for paraquat suicide attempts is comparatively high, at 42 to 80 per cent.

### Way forward:

- Paraquat is yet to be listed in the prior informed consent (PIC) of Rotterdam Convention, is an international treaty on import/export of hazardous chemicals signed in 1998.

- India is also a party to the convention, which has 161 parties. If a chemical figures in the PIC, the exporting country has to take the importing nation's prior consent before exporting it.
- The industry has been able to bulldoze all efforts to bring it under the PIC list and to regulate it in any way possible. It is for the government to understand the gravity and take steps to break the nexus
- <https://emergency.cdc.gov/agent/paraquat/basics/facts.asp>  
<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/agriculture/there-s-no-antidote-to-paraquat-herbicide-ban-it-odisha-docs-to-govt-66779>

## 2) Hidden cost of global food, land use at \$12 trillion: Report

### Why in news?

- The current methods of food production, consumption and land use systems need a serious transformation as they incur 'hidden' environmental, health and poverty costs estimated at almost \$12 trillion a year, according to a new report.

### About Food and land use systems:

- Food and land use systems are defined as the way "land is used, food is produced, stored, packed, processed, traded, distributed, marketed, consumed and disposed of.

### Issues with current food and land use systems:

- These are the leading sources of greenhouse gas emissions (up to 30 per cent) driving climate change, according to the report.
- They are responsible for the degradation of the world's tropical forests, grasslands, wetlands and other remaining natural habitats. They are also the leading cause behind the ongoing 'sixth extinction' of biodiversity.
- **Global farm subsidies** — more than \$1m per minute — are triggering climate crisis and destruction of wildlife, while just 1 per cent of the \$700 billion a year given to farmers is used to benefit the environment, the analysis found.

- Much of the total is, instead, used to promote high-emission cattle production, forest destruction and pollution from overuse of fertilisers.
- The current food systems are also driving widespread malnutrition, besides directly impacting public health.

#### **Malnutrition leads to the largest hidden costs:**

- Today one-third of the world's population is malnourished; by 2030 it is expected to rise up to 50 per cent.
- Since 2014, undernourishment has been rising and more than 820 million people are suffering from hunger. The most affected are in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Climate-related extreme weather, conflict and economic slowdown are responsible for undernourishment.
- The economic structure of the food system also perpetuates poverty and inequality, according to the report.
- Of the 740 million people living in extreme poverty two-thirds are agricultural workers and their dependents which indicates that the world is not on track to eradicate poverty by 2030 (SDG 1).

#### **Impact of hidden costs:**

- These hidden costs can cause
  - (i) irreversible damage to key ecosystems
  - (ii) fundamentally undermine food security in certain regions and
  - (iii) increase public health costs
- Says the report published by the Food and Land use Coalition (FOLU), a collaboration of food, farming and green research groups.

#### **What if no action is taken?**

- If action is not taken timely the costs will rise to more than \$16 trillion a year by 2050, the report warned.
- It will also put the United Nations-mandated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Paris Agreement climate targets out of reach.
- This can further unleash food scarcity, disrupt markets and cause political instability, particularly in poor countries, and greatly affect women and children.

#### **Way forward:**

- The report proposes a reform agenda — centred around 10 critical transitions — of real actionable solutions:

- 1) Healthy diets
- 2) Productive and regenerative agriculture
- 3) A healthy and productive ocean
- 4) Protecting and restoring nature
- 5) Diversifying protein supply
- 6) Reducing food loss and waste
- 7) Local loops and linkages
- 8) Harnessing the digital revolution
- 9) Stronger rural livelihoods
- 10) Gender and demography

- These could enable food and land use systems to provide food security and healthy diets for a global population of over nine billion by 2050, while also tackling core climate, biodiversity, health and poverty challenges.
- While an estimated \$30 billion public investment is required to deliver the transition, if strongly implemented it can result in an estimated \$1.285 trillion by 2030, and \$1.920 trillion by 2050, it noted.
- Reducing the current 'hidden costs' of food and land use systems would add \$5.7 trillion economic gains to society annually by 2030 and \$10.5 trillion annually by 2050.

- <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/agriculture/hidden-cost-of-global-food-land-use-at-12-trillion-report-66745>

### **3) INDIA'S COOLING ACTION PLAN**

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

- On World Ozone Day, India's Cooling Action Plan gets UN applaud.

#### **Significance:**

- India became one of the first countries in the world to launch a comprehensive Cooling Action plan in March, 2019, which has a long term vision to address the cooling requirement across sectors such as residential and commercial buildings, cold-chain, refrigeration, transport and industries.
- The India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP) lists out actions which can help reduce the cooling demand, which will also help in reducing both direct and indirect emissions.

- ICAP has been appreciated internationally as an important policy initiative which has the potential to provide socio-economic and environmental benefits related to reduced refrigerant use, climate change mitigation and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Many countries are now involved in development of cooling action plans keeping in view the significant environmental benefits and the fulfillment of Sustainable Development Goals.

#### **Objectives of cooling action plan:**

- The India Cooling Action seeks to
- (i) reduce cooling demand across sectors by 20% to 25% by 2037-38,
- (ii) reduce refrigerant demand by 25% to 30% by 2037-38,
- (iii) Reduce cooling energy requirements by 25% to 40% by 2037-38,
- (iv) recognize “cooling and related areas” as a thrust area of research under national S&T Programme,
- (v) training and certification of 100,000 servicing sector technicians by 2022-23, synergizing with Skill India Mission.
- ICAP recommends synergies with ongoing government programmes and schemes such as Housing for All, the Smart Cities Mission, Doubling Farmers Income and Skill India Mission, in order to maximize socio-economic co-benefits.
- <https://indiaeducationdiary.in/world-ozone-day-indias-cooling-action-plan-gets-un-applaud/>

## **4) INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR PRESERVATION OF OZONE LAYER**

### **Why in news?**

- The United Nations’ International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer is celebrated on the 16th September every year.

### **Why September 16?**

- Commemorating the 1987 signing of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the day advocates activities that create awareness on topics related to climate change and ozone depletion.

### **Ozone depletion:**

- The ozone layer, a fragile shield of gas, protects the Earth from the harmful portion of the sun's rays, thus helping to preserve life on the planet.
- It is paramount that we protect the ozone layer from harmful substances such as HCFCs (hydrochlorofluorocarbons), which are both ozone-depleting substances and powerful greenhouse gases that contribute to the thinning of the ozone layer.
- Nearly 2,000 times more potent than carbon dioxide in adding to global warming, the successful reduction of HCFC emissions remains one of the UN's greatest challenges.
- The latest Scientific Assessment of Ozone Depletion completed in 2018, shows that, as a result, parts of the ozone layer have recovered at a rate of 1-3% per decade since 2000. At projected rates, Northern Hemisphere and mid-latitude ozone will heal completely by the 2030s.
- The Southern Hemisphere will follow in the 2050s and Polar Regions by 2060. Ozone layer protection efforts have also contributed to the fight against climate change by averting an estimated 135 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions, from 1990 to 2010.
- The gradual phasing out of controlled uses of ozone-depleting substances has not only helped protect the ozone layer for this and future generations, but has also contributed significantly to global efforts to address climate change.
- As a result, it has protected human health and ecosystems by limiting the harmful ultraviolet radiation from reaching Earth.

### **2018 theme:**

- The theme for 2018 was “Keep Cool and Carry on: The Montreal Protocol”, which was a motivational rallying call urging all of us to carry on with the exemplary work of protecting the ozone layer and the climate under the Montreal Protocol.
- The theme had two connotations – that our work of protecting the ozone layer also protects climate and that the Montreal Protocol is a “cool” treaty, as exemplified by its outstanding success.

### **2019 theme:**

- The theme for this year celebrates over three decades of remarkable international

cooperation to protect the ozone layer and the climate under the Montreal Protocol which has led to the phase-out of 99 per cent of ozone-depleting chemicals in refrigerators, air-conditioners and many other products

#### Way forward:

- If you want to take a step towards preventing the ozone layer from further depletion, keep these 5 things in mind:
- 1. Use Public Transport: Pollution emitted from the vehicles cause smog, which can cause harm to the Ozone layer. To avoid this, stop using private vehicles, when not needed. Using bicycles is one of the most convenient ways. If you have to use car, try carpool or use public transport.
- 2. Recycle: Recycling should be one of the prime ways of living. Segregate the dry and organic garbage and then recycle it. Avoid using polythene or plastic completely. Use reusable and recyclable bags instead. Additionally, put maximum things to recycling or reusing.
- 3. Buy Eco-Friendly Products: Toxic chemicals, released from various products, play a large role in harming the ozone layer. Try to curb the menace by buying eco-friendly products, like jute bags, reusable containers, plantable pencils, and others.
- 4. Avoid Pesticides: One of the most harmful components, not just to animals, but also to humans, is pesticides. To ensure the maximum yield, the farmers grow vegetables in protection of pesticides. Try to curb it, by growing your own vegetables. Also, suggest others to use natural remedies to protect the plants.
- 5. Avoid products that emit CFCs: Although it may seem unbelievable, the daily use appliances such as refrigerators and ACs emit CFCs. While it has been banned or reduced in many applications, it is always safe to keep the use of these products in check.
- We must all push to keep hold of these gains, in particular by remaining vigilant and tackling any illegal sources of ozone-depleting substances as they arise.
- We must also wholeheartedly support the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, which entered into force on 1 January 2019.
- By phasing down hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), which are potent climate-warming gases, this amendment can avoid up to 0.4°C of global temperature rise by the end of the century, while continuing to protect the ozone layer.
- And by combining action to phase-down HFCs with energy efficiency improvements in the cooling industry, we can achieve bigger climate benefits.
- <https://www.news18.com/news/world/international-day-for-the-preservation-of-the-ozone-layer-5-ways-to-save-the-earths-shield-2310363.html>
- <https://www.greeningtheblue.org/event/international-day-preservation-ozone-layer>
- <https://www.un.org/en/events/ozoneday/>

# ECONOMY

## 1) Measures to boost exports and to revive housing sector

### Why in News?

- Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a **set of government decisions to revive the economy**, including a **Rs. 50,000 crore export incentive scheme** and a **Rs. 10,000 crore special window to provide last mile funding for unfinished housing projects**.
- The announcements focused on providing a **fillip to exports**, which contracted 6.05% in August, and **easing the plight of home buyers**.

### Export package

- Setting up of the **Scheme for Remission of Duties or Taxes on Export Product (RoDTEP)**, which will **replace the Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS)**.
- The existing dispensation in textiles of MEIS and the old ROSL (Rebate of State Levies) will continue up to December 31, 2019.
- The previous MEIS and the new RoDTEP are designed to incentivise exports by giving them rewards to offset the duties they pay to export their products.
- The rate of reward under MEIS varies between 2% and 7% of the free-on-board (FOB) value, depending on the item and the country it is being exported to.
- RoDTEP will **more than adequately incentivise exporters than existing schemes put together**. The revenue foregone is projected at up to Rs. 50,000 crore per year.

### Merchandise Exports from India Scheme (MEIS)

- It is one of the two schemes introduced in **Foreign Trade Policy of India 2015-20**, as a part of **Exports from India Scheme**. (The other scheme is SEIS, Service Exports from India Scheme).
- The Objective of the MEIS Scheme is to offset infrastructural inefficiencies and the associated costs of exporting products produced in India.

- With the aim of **making India's products more competitive in the global markets**, the scheme provides incentive in the form of duty credit scrip to the exporter to compensate for his loss on payment of duties.

### Free on board (FOB)

- It is a contractual term that refers to the requirement that the seller delivers the goods at the seller's cost via a specific route to a destination designated by the buyer.
- In another move aimed at **freeing up the working capital of exporters**, the Finance Minister announced a **fully electronic refund module** for the quick and automated refund of input tax credits that will become operational by the end of September.
- To **increase bank credit to exporters**, the **Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC)** will expand the scope of its Export Credit Insurance Scheme to provide a **higher insurance cover to banks** that are lending working capital for exports.
- *More details in the next topic.*
- Simultaneously, the **Reserve Bank of India** is also **looking into modifying the priority sector lending norms for the export sector** to release an additional Rs. 36,000 crore to Rs. 68,000 crore as export credit.
- The entire process of **export clearances will be digitised** and all offline or manual processes will be eliminated to **reduce the 'time to export.'**
- Further, an **action plan to reduce the time to export and turn-around time in airports and ports** benchmarked to international standards will be implemented by December 2019.
- Work with exporters to help them best exploit the advantages of the various free trade agreements India has signed with other countries, **increasing the testing and certification infrastructure** in India, and enforcing the time-bound adoption by

industry of all necessary mandatory technical standards.

### Housing package

- The most notable decision was the setting up of a **special fund** that would provide **last-mile funding for housing projects that are not categorised as non-performing assets** and are not undergoing National Company Law Tribunal proceedings.
- The Finance Minister said the government's contribution to the fund would be Rs. 10,000 crore and the other investors would contribute "roughly the same amount".
- The fund is to be professionally run with experts from housing and banking sectors.
- The **external commercial borrowing guidelines will be relaxed** to facilitate financing for home buyers who are eligible under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana.
- The **interest rate on house building advances will be lowered** and linked with the 10 Year Government Security yields.

### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/business/government-announces-rs-50000-crore-export-incentive-scheme/article29417295.ece>
- <https://www.eepcindia.org/MEIS/about-MEIS-scheme.aspx>
- [https://investinganswers.com/dictionary/f/free-board-fob#targetText=Free%20on%20board%20\(FOB\)%20is,destination%20designated%20by%20the%20buyer.](https://investinganswers.com/dictionary/f/free-board-fob#targetText=Free%20on%20board%20(FOB)%20is,destination%20designated%20by%20the%20buyer.)
- <https://cleartax.in/s/ecgc>

## 2) Enhanced Export Credit Insurance Scheme for banks

### Details of the scheme

- The new export credit insurance scheme will be called 'Nirvik.'
- At present, the **Export Credit Guarantee Corporation (ECGC)** gives a cover of **60% of the loss** to banks.
- The new scheme **will give 90% coverage** of the principal and interest of the loan for pre- and post-shipment credit, and half of this will be provided in 30 days.

- Claim inspection would be waived for up to Rs. 10 crore. The previous limit for document inspection was Rs. 1 crore.
- The existing **premium rate would be lowered.**

### Benefits of the scheme

- The benefit to banks from this increased cover is that this is in effect a credit enhancement scheme.
- The rating for the bank loans to exporters becomes AA due to this enhanced insurance cover.

### About ECGC

- **Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India (ECGC)** is an enterprise wholly owned by the Indian Government and is **administered through the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.**
- ECGC which was set up in the year 1957 with the intention to **promote exports** by offering **credit risk insurance** and **allied services to the exporters.**

### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/business/digital-certificate-of-origin-system-unveiled/article29433198.ece>

## 3) Government to peg MGNREGA wages to inflation

### Why in News?

- The Centre plans to inject more money into **the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme** by **linking wages under the Act to an updated inflation index**, which will be **revised annually.**

### What is need for the revision?

- Staring at a slump in rural demand and a slowdown in the rural economy, the Centre hopes this will increase wages, thus increasing purchasing power and reviving rural demand.
- Wage rate revisions are usually notified at the beginning of a financial year, but the Rural Development Ministry is trying to implement the hike during the current year itself, as part of a stimulus package to counter the ongoing slowdown.

### Concerns

- Some economists question whether linking wage rates to a better inflation index will be sufficient, given that

MGNREGA workers get paid much lower than market rates.

- The national average wage of an MGNREGA worker is Rs. 178.44 per day, less than half of the Rs. 375 per day minimum wage recommended by a Labour Ministry panel earlier this year.
- Even with existing wages, **the scheme is running out of funds** due to **increased demand for work**.
- The increased wages based on updated inflation indices may result in **10% higher government expenditure** on the scheme.
- MGNREGA received a budgetary allocation of Rs. 60,000 crore, of which more than 75% has already been released by the Centre even before the halfway point of the year.
- Last week, the Rural Development Ministry asked the Finance Ministry for an additional supplementary grant of Rs. 15,000-20,000 crore.
- **Droughts and floods** in several States have led to an increased demand for work in the early part of the year, and the **economic slowdown** could spur demand again once the rabi planting season is over.

#### Need for an updated inflation index

- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation had already begun work to update the **consumer price indices for rural areas (CPI-R)** and **agricultural labourers (CPI-AL)** respectively.
- The consumption basket of **CPI-AL** [which **determines MGNREGA wage revisions**] has not been updated for more than three decades, and rural consumption patterns have changed drastically in that time.
- For instance, Food items make up more than two-thirds of the CPI-AL consumption basket, but rural workers today spend a much smaller percentage of their money on subsidised food, and an increasingly larger amount on health, education and transport costs.

#### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/nation/al/government-to-peg-mgnrega-wages-to-inflation-in-bid-to-hike-incomes/article29443145.ece>

## 4) Centre to include Kerala in industrial corridor

### Why in News?

- The Central government has decided to **extend the Chennai-Bengaluru industrial corridor to Kochi**.

### News in detail

- The decision to extend the corridor to Kochi **via Coimbatore** was conveyed to the Kerala government by the **National Industrial Corridor Development and Implementation Trust (NICDIT)**.
- Two **integrated manufacturing clusters** would be developed, one in **Palakkad** (Kerala) and the other at **Salem** (Tamil Nadu).
- For setting up the integrated manufacturing clusters, land has also been identified in Kannambra, Uzhalapathy, and Puthussery.
- The Centre and the State government would jointly form a special purpose vehicle for managing the clusters.
- The cluster in Kerala would be located on either sides of the **Kochi-Salem National Highway**.
- This would comprise electronics, food processing, agro-based units, IT and traditional industries too. This is expected to provide 10,000 jobs.

### Expected benefits

- Establishment of the corridor will substantially contribute to developing manufacturing industries in the region and **transform** the Kochi-Palakkad region into a **major manufacturing hub of South India**.
- Once established, the industrial activity will be dispersed to **other regions of the State**, with **forward and backward linkages**.
- The project **will initiate a trend of reverse migration**, attracting the young manpower from the State resorting to various manufacturing activities, including high-end engineering works within the State.
- The project is expected to trigger the **overall economic growth of the State** and its **employment generation on a sustainable mode**.

### More about NICDIT

- NICDIT is an apex body under the administrative control of the **Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP)** for coordinated and unified development of the following industrial corridors:

- 1) Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC)
- 2) Chennai-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (CBIC)
- 3) Amritsar-Kolkata Industrial Corridor (AKIC)
- 4) Bengaluru-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (BMIC)
- 5) Vizag-Chennai Industrial Corridor (VCIC)

- NICDIT will **support project development activities** and appraisal, approval and sanction of projects.
- It will also **coordinate and monitor all central efforts for the development of Industrial Corridor projects.**

#### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/centre-to-include-state-in-industrial-corridor/article29450567.ece>
- <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=159250>

## 5) More dedicated freight corridors in the pipeline

#### Why in News?

- The Railways is working on **three more dedicated freight corridors (DFC)** at an estimated cost of about Rs. 2.6 lakh crore **over the next 10 years.**

#### News in Detail

- Work on the **North-South (Delhi-Chennai), East-West (Mumbai-Howrah) and East Coast (Kharagpur-Vijayawada) DFCs** is under way and the final location survey would be completed in the next one year.
- The three DFCs would be around 6,000-km long and would be commissioned in the next 10 years.
- A detailed project report would be created after which the three DFC projects would be put up for Cabinet approval.

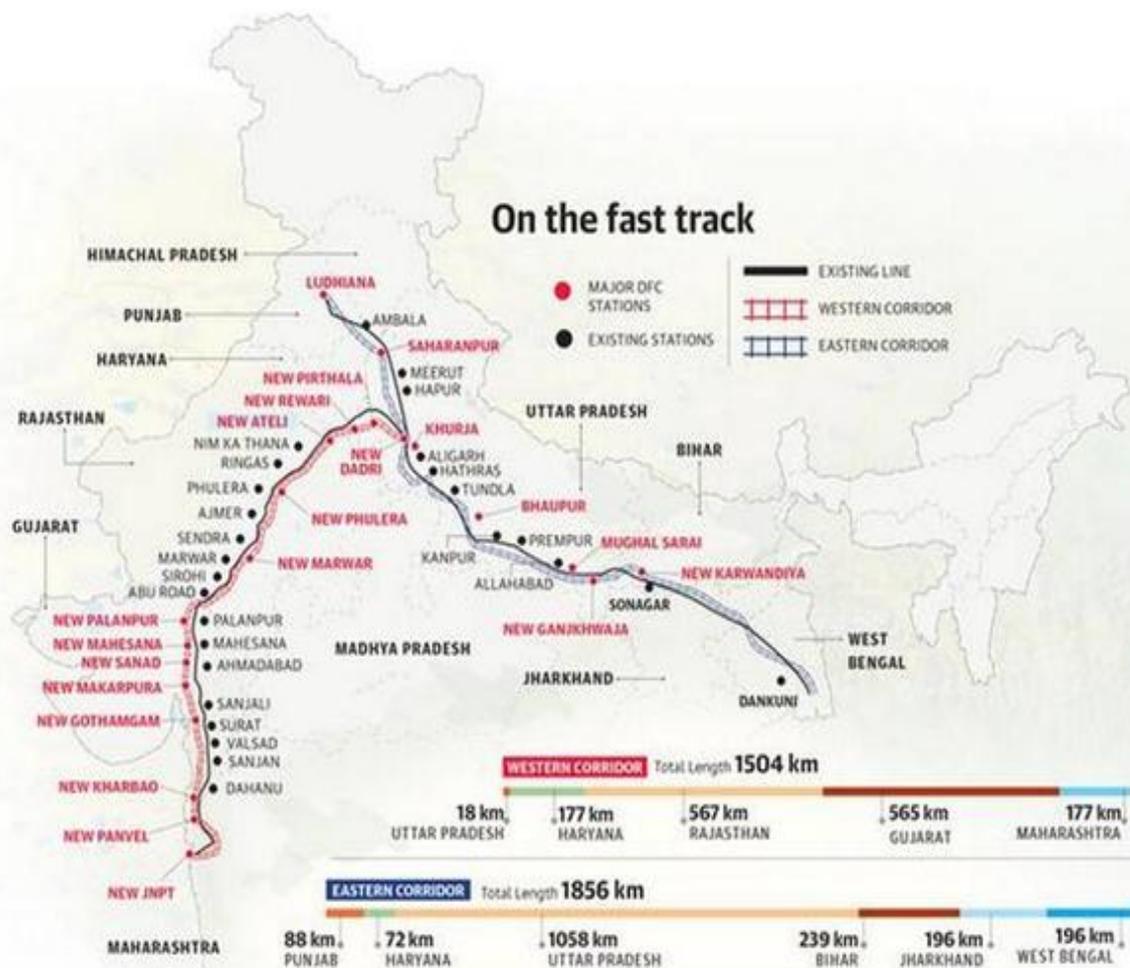
- This will help the national transporter to **free up the current tracks to run enough passenger trains** so that no traveller gets wait-listed.

#### DFCs under implementation

- **Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) from Ludhiana to Dankuni (1,856km) and Western Dedicated Freight Corridor (WDFC) from Dadri to Jawaharlal Nehru Port (1,504km)** are being built and are expected **to be completed by 2021.**
- Train travellers could expect to be **free of waiting list within the four years** on the **two busiest routes of Delhi-Mumbai (part of WDFC) and Delhi-Howrah (part of EDFC) routes.**
- The Railways is **planning to run freight and passenger trains on demand** on these routes in the next four years.
- **More about DFCs**
- **Indian Railways'** DFC project involves constructing **five freight corridors** across the country through its arm **Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Ltd (DFCCIL).**
- The freight corridors are key to the government's infrastructure projects that seeks to **decongest railway network**, ensure faster movement of goods, increase the national carrier's freight capacity network and reduce overall logistics cost for companies.
- **Rationalization of freight rates** has always been a top industry demand as higher logistics expense escalates the overall cost of a product.

#### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/other-states/trains-on-demand-on-delhi-mumbai-delhi-howrah-routes-in-next-4-years-vk-yadav/article29440575.ece>
- <https://www.livemint.com/politics/policy/railways-seeks-cabinet-nod-to-build-3-freight-corridors-at-3-trillion-1563737145788.html>
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/ateli-enters-history-on-a-freight-train/article24861766.ece>



## 6) RBI revises norms for concurrent audit in banks

### Why in News?

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has revised norms for concurrent audit in banks and mandated lenders should ensure that risk-sensitive areas identified by them are covered under the audit.

### About Concurrent audit

- **Concurrent audit** means doing the examination of the financial transactions at the time of happening or **parallel with the transaction**.
- Concurrent audit aims at shortening the interval between a transaction and its independent examination.
- It is **part of a bank's early warning system** to ensure timely detection of irregularities and lapses. It helps in **preventing fraudulent transactions** at branches.

### Conditions of concurrent audit

- The RBI suggested that all centralized processing centres (business origination

and monitoring) should be covered under concurrent audit.

- With regard to appointment of auditors, it has been left to banks whether concurrent audit should be done by the bank's own staff or external auditors.
- The head of internal audit in the bank should participate in selection of concurrent auditors where such function is outsourced and should be responsible for the quality review of the work of the concurrent auditors reporting to her/him.
- Banks should ensure if any partner of a chartered accountant firm is a director of the bank, no partner of the same firm should be appointed as concurrent auditor in the same bank.
- The tenure of external concurrent auditors with a bank should not be more than five years on continuous basis.
- The age limit for retired staff engaged as concurrent auditors has been capped at 70 years.

- No concurrent auditor shall be allowed to continue with a branch/business unit for a period of more than three years.

#### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/business/rbi-revises-norms-for-concurrent-audit-in-banks/article29461833.ece#targetText=The%20Reserve%20Bank%20of%20India,are%20covered%20under%20the%20audit.&targetText=The%20RBI%20said%20the%20tenure, five%20years%20on%20continuous%20basis.>
- <https://taxguru.in/chartered-accountant/bank-audit-check-list-procedure-concurrent-audit.html>

## 7) Digital certificate of origin system unveiled

#### Why in News?

- Common digital platform for the issuance of certificates of origin was launched.

#### News in Detail

- For exports to countries with which India has free trade agreements (FTA), exporters have to show a certificate that the consignment originated in India.
- With the launch of the **common digital platform for the issuance of certificates of origin**, now, these certificates can be obtained online and all the issuing authorities will be on the same portal.
- India is engaging with its trading partners and the countries it had FTAs with to ensure they accepted the digital certificates.

#### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/business/digital-certificate-of-origin-system-unveiled/article29433198.ece>

## 8) Drone strikes on Saudi facility lead to jump in crude prices

#### Why in News?

- Drone attacks on Saudi Arabia's crude processing facility, the largest in the world, have impacted half of the country's crude oil production and about 5% of the world supply.
- Following the attacks, on Monday, Global Brent crude futures shot up more than 20% to \$66.91 per barrel.

#### Background

- In the early hours of September 14, Saudi Arabia suffered the deadliest attack on its oil facilities in recent times when a small army of drones attacked two major oil plants, destroying nearly 50 per cent of the country's global supply of crude.
- The Houthi rebel group based in neighbouring Yemen claimed responsibility for the attack, but the United States, a key Saudi ally, blamed Iran for it, a charge the latter denied.

#### Impact on India

- **Saudi Arabia is a major source of oil imports for India**, accounting for nearly **18%** of the 226 million tonnes of crude the country imported during 2018-19.
- India, which imports more than 80% of its crude oil requirement, is particularly vulnerable to geopolitical risks arising out of the oil producing countries.
- However, allaying Indian fears, Saudi Aramco officials have told oil companies that the attacks would not result in a shortage of supplies.
- The oil markets will nevertheless be nervous as any retaliatory measures by Saudi Arabia and its allies will keep the market on tenterhooks.
- As a result, oil prices would factor in sizeable **geopolitical risk premium**, which will be **negative for Indian consumers**.

#### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/drone-strikes-wont-hit-oil-supplies-ministry/article29433560.ece>
- <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/saudi-arabia-aramco-oil-facility-attacked-what-makes-drone-attacks-so-dangerous-1600169-2019-09-17>

## 9) Government cuts corporate tax to spur investment, jobs

#### Why in News?

- The government issued an ordinance to **reduce the corporate tax rate for domestic firms and new manufacturing units by 10 to 12 percentage points**, effectively bringing India's tax rates on par with its competing Asian peers.

#### News in Detail

- The government issued an **ordinance to amend the Income Tax Act of 1961** and

the **Finance Act of 2019** to bring in the changes.

- For domestic companies,
- A new provision has been inserted in the Income Tax law to allow any **domestic company** to pay **income tax at the rate of 22%** (from 30%), subject to the condition that they won't avail any other (tax) incentives or exemptions.
- There will be **no Minimum Alternate Tax (MAT)** levied on them.
- Therefore **effective tax rate** for domestic corporates, inclusive of surcharges, will fall from 34.94% to **25.17%**.

- **Minimum Alternative Tax**
- It is payable under the Income Tax Act.
- The concept of MAT was introduced to target those companies that make huge profits and pay the dividend to their shareholders but pay no/minimal tax under the normal provisions of the Income Tax Act, by taking advantage of the various deductions, and exemptions allowed under the Act.
- But with the introduction of MAT, the companies have to pay a fixed percentage of their profits as Minimum Alternate Tax. MAT is applicable to all companies, including foreign companies.

- For new manufacturing firms,
- To spur fresh investments and boost Make in India efforts, for **new manufacturing companies** incorporated after October 1, 2019 and commencing production by March 31, 2023, the **income tax rate will be 15%** from 25% at present.
- These firms will **also be exempt from MAT**.
- The **effective tax rate** for these companies will be **17.01%**, compared to 29.1% at present.
- In order to provide **relief to firms who want to continue with the existing regime** of exemptions, some **MAT relief** is also given– the tax rate has been **reduced from 18.5% to 15%**.
- These tax cuts **include a reduction in the surcharge** on corporate income tax from 12% to 10%.
- **Foreign investors could also avail** of the new tax rates, provided they had an

establishment in the country or were investing equity into an Indian firm.

- The government was betting on “more investments leading to more jobs and economic activity that would shore up revenues”.

### Concerns

- The slew of measures unveiled, including a rollback of the enhanced surcharge levied on foreign portfolio investors in the Budget, is estimated to cost the exchequer **Rs. 1,45,000** crore a year in terms of revenue foregone.
- This will impact the government's fiscal arithmetic and the **3.3% fiscal deficit target** for the year.
- Since the corporate tax cuts do not address the **subdued demand conditions** in the economy, private sector firms will wait for demand to revive before they start investing.
- However, there is also the view that corporate tax rate cuts **will make Indian companies more competitive globally**, and will **encourage foreign companies to invest** in India, which could boost private sector investments.

### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/govt-slashes-corporate-tax-to-2517-for-domestic-companies/article29466176.ece>
- <https://www.thehindu.com/business/tax-cuts-may-not-boost-investment/article29471792.ece>
- <https://cleartax.in/s/tax-planning-under-mat>

## 10) Firms can use CSR funds for R&D

### Why in News?

- The government has **decided to allow corporate India** to use their mandatory **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) spending for investments in publicly-funded incubators** and contribute to research efforts in science, technology, medicine and engineering at major institutions and bodies.

### Context

- India's spending on research and development (R&D) activities has been far less than 1% of GDP for years, with the

private sector chipping in less than half of investments.

- The Companies Act requires firms with a net worth of Rs. 500 crore, turnover of Rs. 1,000 crore or net profit of Rs. 5 crore or more to set aside 2% of their average net profit over the last three years towards 'approved' CSR activities.
- Now this 2% can be spent on incubators funded by Central or State government or any agency of a Central or State public sector undertaking.
- They can also make contributions to publicly funded universities, IITs, national laboratories and autonomous bodies (established under the auspices of ICAR,

ICMR, CSIR, DAE, DRDO, DST and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology).

- This would enable a private pharmaceutical company, for instance, to undertake research in pharmaceuticals in conjunction with a publicly funded institution like IIT or ICMR and derive benefit from it.

**Source**

- <https://www.thehindu.com/business/firms-can-use-csr-funds-for-rd/article29471805.ece>

# International Relations

## 1) Pakistan refuses India's request to open airspace for Narendra Modi

### Why in News?

- **Pakistan** on Wednesday (18/09/2019) announced that it would not allow the use of its airspace for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's flight to Germany.
- The reason given was the Indian state's callous attitude towards Kashmiris, tyranny and violation of human rights in Kashmir.
- For background and more details, refer *Pulse Issue No. 14*.

### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/pakistan-refuses-indias-request-to-open-airspace-for-pm-modi/article29450905.ece>

## 2) India, U.S. to end dogfight over ground handling

### Why in News?

- India is set to amend its ground handling regulations for foreign airlines to pacify the U.S., which in a retaliatory action recently barred Air India from performing ground operations on its own at American airports.

### Background

- On July 30, the **U.S. Department of Transportation** served an order amending Air India's foreign air carrier permit, and barring it from performing its own ground-handling functions in the U.S., after India failed to allow U.S. airlines to "exercise their bilateral right to perform their own ground handling (to "self-handle") at Indian airports".
- Air India is the only Indian carrier that currently flies to the U.S.
- **Section 3(2)** of the ground handling regulations (of India) states that a foreign airline **may undertake passenger and baggage handling activities, but prohibits them from carrying out a list of 60 security functions** in ground operations.
- India earned U.S. ire as the regulations, which were amended in 2017 and notified again in 2018, were at **variance with the**

**India-U.S. air services agreement of 2005**, which allowed the two countries' airlines to perform their own ground handling in the territory of the other party.

### News in Detail

- The Civil Aviation Ministry aims to adjust ground handling norms and devise a mechanism to attempt to address the concerns of the U.S. without compromising security.
- A **special dispensation** will be allowed to those countries with which India has an **air services agreement** (Australia and Canada) **to perform ground operations**.
- The Ministry will be seeking an in-principle approval from the Union Cabinet as the issue pertains to national security, before moving to modify the clause in the **Airports Authority of India (Ground Handling Services Regulations), 2018**, which forbids foreign airlines from carrying out security functions within ground handling services.
- However, the restriction on security functions **will continue to apply to foreign airlines of other countries**.

### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-to-alter-ground-handling-norms-to-pacify-us/article29452222.ece>

## 3) India, Mongolia to explore space together

### Why in News?

- India and Mongolia signed Memorandum of Understandings on **space cooperation and disaster management** that will provide a new dimension to the **India-Mongolia strategic partnership**.

### News in Detail

- The agreements would allow India to support Mongolia in **resource management** and **satellite communication**.
- A joint statement said the space cooperation would allow "**peaceful exploration**" of outer space and include **remote sensing** and **weather forecasting**.

### More in News

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mr. Battulga unveiled a **statue of Lord Buddha** located at the historic **Gandan Tegchenling Monastery** in capital Ulaanbaatar.

**Source**

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-mongolia-to-explore-space-together/article29471166.ece>

# SCIENCE and TECHNOLOGY

## 1) MIT engineers create blackest of all materials

### Why in News?

- Engineers at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) have created a material that they claim is **10 times blacker** than anything that has previously been reported.

### News in detail

- The material is made from **vertically aligned carbon nanotubes**, or CNTs — microscopic filaments of carbon that the team grew on a surface of chlorine-etched aluminum foil.
- The foil **captures more than 99.96% of any incoming light**, making it the blackest material on record, according to a study published in the journal *ACS Applied Materials and Interfaces*.
- The material **may be useful in optical blinders** that reduce unwanted glare or to help space telescopes spot orbiting exoplanets.

### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/education/mit-engineers-create-blackest-of-all-materials/article29418897.ece>

## 2) Railways to adopt HOG system to save power cost

### Why in News?

- A **clean technology—Head on Generation (HOG)**—is being adopted by the Indian Railways for powering the trains.

### News in Detail

- In HOG, the **power supply is tapped from overhead power lines** and distributed to train coaches.
- Currently, there are one or two power cars at the end of every train in every **Linke Hofmann Busch (LHB)** rake, where the electricity to be supplied to coaches is **produced in a diesel generator**.
- The new technology **will result in a foreign exchange savings** of about Rs. 1,400 crore per year as it will reduce dependence on diesel.

- The **power generator cars** which used to make **huge noise** and **emit fumes** will no more be there. In place of two such generator cars there will be one standby silent generator car to be used for emergency.
- This will **make the train journey quieter** for travellers and more **economical** for the Railways.
- With the start of new HOG system in October, over four lakh additional berths will be available to passengers everyday.
- The new technology will be available at Rs. 6 per unit as compared to end EOG system, in which cost of power is Rs. 22 per unit
- As of now, 342 trains have already started using the new technology. There is a **plan to convert all LHB trains to HOG** technology within the end of the current financial year.

- As compared to Integral Coach Factory (ICF) design coaches, the **LHB design coaches** are **lighter** in weight and have **higher carrying capacity** as well as **higher speed potential**. Also the LHB design coaches **have increased codal life** and **better safety features**. LHB coaches also **have anti-climbing features**, so that in case of a collision, the coaches do not climb on top of each other.
- **End on Generation (EOG)** is the system used on fully air conditioned Rajdhani and Shatabdi trains. It comprises **two power cars per train**. Each power car has two DG sets and these are mounted inside the power car or the entire power car coach which is dedicated for these power plants. The power generated by these DG sets is utilized for **hotel load** (electrical load caused by all systems other than propulsion) of the train.

### Source

- <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/railways-to-adopt-hog-system-to-save-power-cost-1568735027633.html>
- <https://www.financialexpress.com/infrastructure/railways/why-indian-railways->

[is-manufacturing-only-lhb-design-coaches-now/1262887/](https://www.livemint.com/Politics/kVxP-Py6JS3FbugAa7ggj2H/Railway-Budget-2008--Introduce-EOG-system-to-passenger-trai.html)

- <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/kVxP-Py6JS3FbugAa7ggj2H/Railway-Budget-2008--Introduce-EOG-system-to-passenger-trai.html>

### 3) Transgenic mosquitoes transfer genes to native mosquito species

#### Why in News?

- Genes from genetically-modified *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes were found to have been transferred to naturally-occurring *A. aegypti* mosquito population in three areas in Brazil where transgenic mosquitoes were released.
- *A. aegypti* mosquitoes are responsible for transmitting dengue, chikungunya and Zika virus.

#### Context

- The **genetic strategy** employed to control *A. aegypti* population is known as **RIDL** (Release of Insects carrying Dominant Lethal genes).
- It works on the premise that the transgenic male mosquitoes released frequently in large numbers would compete with the naturally occurring male mosquitoes to mate with the females.
- Offspring from the mating of transgenic male mosquito and naturally occurring female mosquito do not survive to the adult stage.
- This is because tetracycline drug, which prevents the dominant lethal gene from producing the lethal protein during rearing in labs, is not present in sufficient quantity in nature.
- In the absence of tetracycline, there is overproduction of the lethal protein causing the larvae to die.

#### Findings of the new study

- About 4,50,000 transgenic male mosquitoes were released each week for 27 months (June 2013 to September 2015) in three areas in Brazil.
- Genetic analysis of naturally occurring mosquitoes were done prior to the release and at six, 12, and 27-30 months after the releases.
- Researchers from Yale University studied 347 naturally-occurring *A. aegypti*

mosquitoes for transfer of genes from the transgenic insects.

- They found that some transgenic genes were found in 10-60% of naturally-occurring mosquitoes.
- Also, the naturally occurring *A. aegypti* mosquitoes carrying some genes of the transgenic mosquitoes were able to reproduce in nature and spread to neighbouring areas 4 km away.
- The **results were published** in the journal *Scientific Reports*.

#### Concerns

- The RIDL strategy is **supposed to only reduce the population of the naturally occurring *A. aegypti* mosquitoes and not affect or alter their genetics.**
- Also, **offspring are not supposed to grow to adult mosquitoes** and reproduce as per claims made by the British company Oxitec Ltd, which had developed the technology and field-tested it in several countries.
- However this has not happened in the study.

#### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/transgenic-mosquitoes-transfer-genes-to-native-mosquito-species/article29446151.ece>

### 4) Sangam era older than previously thought, finds study

#### Why in News?

- In a major turning point in the cultural historiography of the ancient Sangam Age, the **Tamil Nadu Archaeology Department (TNAD)** has stated that the cultural deposits unearthed during excavations at Keeladi in Sivaganga district could be safely dated to a period between **6th century BCE and 1st century CE.**
- The report titled, '**Keeladi-An Urban Settlement of Sangam Age on the Banks of River Vaigai**', was published by the TNAD.

#### Major findings of the report

- The new findings in the report place Keeladi artefacts about **300 years earlier than previously believed** — 3rd century BCE.

- This is the first time the date has been officially announced by the TNAD.
- One of the six samples collected at the depth of 353 cm and sent for carbon dating test in the U.S. “goes back to **580 BCE.**”
- The results from the fourth excavations suggest that the **second urbanisation** [the first being Indus] of Vaigai plains happened in Tamil Nadu **around 6th century BCE** as it happened in Gangetic plains.
- The recent scientific dates obtained for Keeladi findings push back the date of Tamil-Brahmi script to another century, i.e., 6th century BCE
- The society in Keeladi had **used animals predominantly for agricultural purposes** as suggested by the skeletal remains of species such as cow/ox (*Bos indicus*), buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*), sheep (*Ovis aries*), goat (*Capra hircus*), nilgai (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*), blackbuck (*Antelope cervicapra*), wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) and peacock (*Pavo cristatus*).
- Fifty-six Tamil-Brahmi inscribed potsherds were recovered from the site of excavation conducted by the TNAD alone.
- Recovery of 10 spindle whorls, 20 sharply pinpointed bone tip tools used for design creations, hanging stones of the yarn, terracotta spheres, copper needle and earthen vessels to hold liquid clearly attest to the various stages of **weaving industry** from spinning, yarning, looming and weaving and later for dyeing.
- While three excavations were undertaken by the Archaeological Survey of India, the fourth excavation was undertaken by the TNAD.

#### Source

- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/keeladi-findings-traceable-to-6th-century-bce-report/article29461583.ece>

## 5) A new model to develop influenza vaccines

### Why in News?

- The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) is close to finalising three projects worth Rs.135 crore, involving Indian and European scientists, to develop **new influenza vaccines.**

### News in Detail

- These projects are **unique** in that they involve a **Controlled Human Infection Model (CHIM): volunteers** who take part in trials **will be infected, under expert supervision**, with infectious viruses or bacteria.
- The risk in such trials is that intentionally infecting healthy people with an active virus and causing them to be sick is against medical ethics.
- It also involves putting human lives in danger.

### Ethics and guidance

- By November, experts in vaccine development, social scientists and bio-ethicists are expected to prepare, with the DBT’s support, a guidance document that will elaborate upon the circumstances under which CHIM trials may be conducted, facilities needed, the profile of potential volunteers, the informed-consent forms they would need to sign and the compensation that can be offered.
- Post the availability of guidance documents, there needs to be approval from the Drug Controller-General of India.

### Benefits to India

- Rather than influenza trials, India would likely develop CHIM protocols to study bacterial or enteric viruses (residing in the intestine) such as cholera or typhoid.
- If successful, these would serve to create back-ups to the existing cholera and typhoid vaccines.
- Experience with CHIM could help to create clinical investigators trained in vaccine development.

### Need for CHIM models

- Vaccines traditionally are made of a weakened form of a disease-causing virus or bacteria and injected into the body to coax the immune system into making antibodies that create immunity against future infection.
- Years of vaccine development has shown that frequently vaccines that work in small groups of people may not always work in large populations, or those that are effective in one country may not be in another.
- CHIM models help vaccine-makers quantify whether potential vaccine

candidates can be effective in people and identify the factors that determine why some vaccinated people fall sick and others do not.

[scientists-make-new-vaccines/article29461633.ece](https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/catch-a-cold-and-help-scientists-make-new-vaccines/article29461633.ece)

**Source**

- [https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/catch-a-cold-and-help-](https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/catch-a-cold-and-help-scientists-make-new-vaccines/article29461633.ece)

# ART and CULTURE

## 1) More whistling villages: MP stirs problem of plenty for Meghalaya

- GS Paper I – Art and culture
- The inclusion of Kongthong village in the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage for preserving its practice of giving each child a unique tune — called jingrwai iawbei in the Khasi language — instead of a name has been proposed recently.

### The whistling culture

- 22 other villages around Kongthong have a similar practice of mothers composing a tune for her child until they attain a certain age to be called by “normal” names.
- Out of the 53 villages in the Khat-ar Shnong area, 23 communicate through whistling and calling each other by a tune.
- Khat-ar means an area belonging to 12 clans of the Khasi community and Shnong means village. The area comes under the Sohra Hima (a kingdom-like traditional administrative unit) headed by a syiem or chieftain. Sohra is the local name for Cherrapunjee in East Khasi Hills district.

### UNESCO Intangible heritage list – its significance

- It includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.
- It is inclusive, representative, community based and traditional as well as contemporary at the same time.
- While fragile, intangible cultural heritage is an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of growing globalization. An understanding of the intangible cultural heritage of different communities helps with intercultural dialogue, and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life.

- The importance of intangible cultural heritage is not the cultural manifestation itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next. The social and economic value of this transmission of knowledge is relevant for minority groups and for mainstream social groups within a State, and is as important for developing States as for developed ones.

▪ <https://ich.unesco.org/en/what-is-intangible-heritage-00003>

▪ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/more-whistling-villages-mp-stirs-problem-of-plenty-for-meghalaya/article29418680.ece>

## 2) Keezhadi excavations: Sangam era older than previously thought, finds study

- GS Paper I – art and culture; ancient history; Sangam age

### Context -

- The Tamil Nadu Archaeology Department (TNAD) has stated that the cultural deposits unearthed during excavations at Keeladi in Sivaganga district could be safely dated to a period between 6th century BCE and 1st century CE. Keeladi artefacts are about 300 years earlier than previously believed — 3rd century BCE. This is the first time the date has been officially announced by the TNAD.
- The study suggests that the “second urbanisation in the Vaigai plains happened in Tamil Nadu around 6th century BCE.
- The first urbanisation in Indian History is from the Indus Valley Civilisation.
- The recent scientific dates obtained for Keeladi findings push back the date of Tamil-Brahmi script to another century, i.e., 6th century BCE. 56 Tamil-Brahmi inscribed potsherds were recovered from the site of excavation conducted by the TNAD. These results clearly ascertained

that they attained literacy or learned the art of writing as early as 6th century BCE.

- Water containers and cooking vessels were shaped out of locally available raw materials. Recovery of 10 spindle whorls, 20 sharply pinpointed bone tip tools used for design creations, hanging stones of the yarn, terracotta spheres, copper needle and earthen vessels to hold liquid clearly attest to the various stages of weaving industry from spinning, y
- This finding suggests that the society in Keeladi had used animals predominantly for agricultural purposes.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/tamil-nadu/keeladi-findings-traceable-to-6th-century-bce-report/article29461583.ece>

### 3) The Preventable Bengal Famine

- GS Paper I - Indian History

#### Bengal Famine

- Around 1.5 to 3 million people perished in the man-made Bengal famine of 1943. However, it continues to be perceived as a tragic occurrence and not an atrocity. Everyday thousands of emaciated dead had to be removed from the streets of Calcutta by police and government-funded corpse disposal organisations.

- Voluminous official records from that period available in the India Office Records section of the British Library establish that the famine was not the outcome of a lack of food grain. Rather, political machinations, greed, hoarding and bureaucratic bungling on a massive scale led to Bengal Famine.

#### The fundamental causes of the famine:

- The need to feed a vast Army diverted foodstuffs.
- Rice imports from Burma and South-East Asia had been stopped.
- The famine got aggravated by gross mismanagement and deliberate profiteering; rationing methods were belated and were confined to big cities.
- Famine Commissions during British Rule in India
- First Famine Commission : Set up in 1878 under the Chairmanship of Sir Richard Strachey
- Second Famine Commission: Set up in 1897 under the Chairmanship of Sir James Lyall
- Third Famine Commission: Set up in 1900 under the Chairmanship of Sir Anthony McDonnell

# PIB ANALYSIS

## 1) First Trilateral Naval Exercise:

### Objective:

- The five-day-long exercise is aimed at bolstering the maritime inter-relationships amongst Singapore Thailand and India, and contributes significantly to enhancing the overall maritime security in the region.
- The exercise would strengthen the mutual confidence amongst three navies in terms of interoperability and development of a common understanding of procedures.

### About Three Naval Exercises:

- This Trilateral naval exercise was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his address at Shangri-La dialogue in June 2018. The Initial Planning Conference (IPC) to discuss modalities of exercise was held in May 2019 and Final Planning Conference (FPC) was held in August 2019. Earlier, Malaysia has also showed interest in joining exercise.

### Ambit of this Exercise:

- RSN Tenacious, a Formidable-class guided missile stealth frigate and His Majesty's Thailand Ship (HTMS) Kraburi, a Guided Missile Frigate would be exercising with Indian Naval Ships Ranvir, a Guided Missile Destroyer, and Kora, a missile corvette and Sukanya, an Offshore Patrol Vessel along with P8I Long Range Maritime Reconnaissance aircraft.
- **Harbour Phase:** The harbour phase is scheduled at Port Blair, professional exchanges, sports fixtures and cross deck familiarisation visits would be organised.
- **Sea Phase :** It is scheduled from 18 Sep to 20 Sep 19, a host of surface and air operations involving Gunnery, Force Protection Measures and Communication drills would be conducted providing experience gaining and learning from each other's best practices.
- The exercise would provide an opportunity to participating navies to come together in a spirit of collaboration to nurture stronger ties.

### Why in News?

- Recently, maiden trilateral exercise involving Republic of Singapore Navy, Royal Thailand Navy and Indian Navy held in Port Blair. It is a Five-day long exercise.

### Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1585206>

## 2) Launch of LEAP and ARPIT - 2019:

### About LEAP:

- Leadership for Academicians Programme (LEAP) is a three weeks Flagship leadership development training programme (2 weeks domestic and one week foreign training) for second level academic functionaries in public funded higher education institutions.

- The main objective is to prepare second tier academic heads that are potentially likely to assume leadership roles in the future. It will make Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) perform their roles of developing better students who will be future torch bearers.

- The programme would provide senior faculty, with high academic credentials, the required leadership and managerial skills including skills of problem-solving, handling stress, team building work, conflict management, developing communication skills, understanding and coping with the complexity and challenges of governance in HEIs, financial & general administration.
- The implementation of LEAP Programme will be through 15 NIRF top ranked Indian Institutions namely. The foreign Universities identified for the training are also within the top 100 in the world global rankings.

### About ARPIT:

- ARPIT is a major and unique initiative of online professional development of 1.5 million higher education faculty using the MOOCs platform SWAYAM.

- For implementing ARPIT, 75 discipline-specific institutions have been identified and notified as National Resource Centres (NRCs) in the first phase.
- They are tasked to prepare online training material with focus on latest developments in the discipline, new & emerging trends, pedagogical improvements and methodologies for transacting revised curriculum.
- The course is a 40 hour module with 20 hours of video content and 20 hours of non-video content. They are offered in a highly flexible format and can be done at one's own pace and time.
- There are built-in assessment exercises and activities as part of the academic progression in the course.
- At the end of the course, they will be a terminal assessment which will be an online examination in a proctored environment conducted by the National Testing Agency.
- All faculties who have successfully completed the online refresher course will be certified.

#### About SWAYAM:

- It is a programme initiated by GOI and designed to achieve the three cardinal principles of Education Policy viz., access, equity and quality.
- The objective of this effort is to take the best teaching learning resources to all, including the most disadvantaged.

#### Launch of LEAP and ARPIT 2019:

- Leadership for Academicians Programme (LEAP) - 2019 and Annual Refresher Programme in Teaching (ARPIT) - 2019 under Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching (PMMMNMTT) in New Delhi.

#### Why in News?

- UHR minister has launched Leadership for Academicians Programme LEAP and Annual Refresher programme in Teaching (ARPIT)

#### Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1585221>

### 3) Air to Air Missile flight test:

#### About ASTRA & the Test:

- ASTRA the first indigenously developed air-to-air missile was successfully flight-tested off the coast of Odisha.
- The missile was launched from Sukhoi-30 MKI. The Astra missile is developed by Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO).

- It works on the Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM) technology that enables the fighter-pilots to shoot precisely at the enemy targets which are beyond their visual range. Astra is extremely effective in a multi-target scenario and therefore, has been described as the most potent weapon system for IAF's combat aircraft.



- Astra is capable of engaging targets at varying ranges and altitudes allowing for engagement of both short-range targets (up to 20 km) and long-range targets (up to 80 km) using alternative propulsion modes.
- It has advanced on-board electronic counter measures that jam radar signals from enemy radar, making tracking of the missile difficult.

#### Why in News?

- ASTRA Air to Air Missile Successfully flight tested from Su-30 MKI.

#### Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1585284>

### 4) Chintan Shivir:

#### About :

- The Chintan Shivir aims to hold deliberations among key stakeholders to further the growth of Indian Steel industry by arriving at a strategy to make the Indian Steel sector vibrant, efficient,

environmentally friendly and globally competitive.

- The key objective of the Chintan Shivir is to enhance competitiveness of Indian Steel Sector, facilitate capacity expansion & technology adoption and augment demand for Indian Steel, both for domestic consumption as well as exports.

#### **Sessions held so far:**

- The First session on “Facilitating domestic capacity expansion with special reference to Secondary Steel Sector” will capture the opportunities & challenges in the sector and discuss upon how it can support the capacity expansion aligned to the targets of National Steel Policy 2017.
- The second session on the theme “Demand Generation” would focus on the demand drivers, defining the growth dynamics of Indian Steel Industry.
- The third session on “Making India a hub for High Grade Steel” would deal with the challenges and opportunities pertaining to indigenous development of high-grade steel.

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

- “The Chintan Shivir was organized by Ministry of Steel along with Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) and Joint Plant Committee as partners.

#### **Source:**

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1585310>

## **6) Workshop for National Water Museum:**

#### **What is the need ?**

- To enhance awareness among the general public at large, about dwindling water resources and need for conservation and about sustainable and judicious use of water resources, under Ministry of Jal Shakti has taken an initiative to develop National Water Museum.

#### **About the Workshop:**

- Many eminent experts in the myriad fields which go into developing a Water Museum from India and abroad, are participating in the workshop.
- The proposed outcome from the Workshop is a blue-print for establishing the proposed National Water Museum under the Ministry of Jal Shakti.

- During the Workshop, possible broad composition / content of the Museum including highlighting the importance of water and its current state in different regions of the Country.

- This is one of the numerous initiatives taken by the Ministry of Jal Shakti towards bringing about changes in the behaviour of all stakeholders and the general public at large for sustainable use of water, in a way which is entertaining and recreating.

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

- Workshop for National water museum was conducted.

#### **Source:**

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1585436>

## **7) WAVE Summit and initiatives of AICTE:**

- Union Human Resource Development Minister Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal ‘Nishank’ launched several initiatives of All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) in New Delhi.

#### **About AICTE:**

- AICTE 7th Pay Regulation defines the process of collecting the 360-degree Feedback Data that will be submitted by the education institutes.
- It was set up in November 1945 as a national-level apex advisory body.
- Its purpose was to conduct a survey on the facilities available for technical education and to promote development in the country in a coordinated and integrated manner.
- Facilitation through Margadarshan and Margadarshak:
- It is an initiative in which the topmost institutions will mentor other institutions so that they can improve their rankings and follow best practices of the mentor institute.

#### **About Margadarshan:**

- Under this scheme, institutions having good accreditation record / highly performing institutions are supposed to mentor relatively newer 10 – 12 potential institutions.
- Best practices in teaching learning process followed in mentor institute are diffused to mentee institutions.

- These institutions are also provided funding up to Rs. 50 lakhs (Rupees Fifty Lakhs Only) per institution over a period of three years in installments for carrying out various activities like trainings, workshops, conferences and travel.

#### **About Margdarshak:**

- Under this scheme, mentor teachers or Margdarshaks who are either serving or superannuated but willing and motivated with good knowledge of accreditation and who can devote adequate time to make required visits to these Institutions are identified.
- These Margdarshaks will regularly visit the mentee institutions, stay on their campus and guide them for their improvement in quality so that institutions are able to get accreditation by NBA.
- Tenure of margdarshak (Teachers) is initially for 6 months, extendable on year on year basis.

#### **360-degree Feedback of Faculty:**

- AICTE 7th Pay Regulation defines the process of collecting the 360-degree Feedback Data that will be submitted by the education institutes.
- It starts by first establishing a data framework that maps Teachers, Students and Subjects/courses to capture the data at source through online mechanism.
- The process begins by self-reporting of the Teaching Process and other Contributions to the Society by the teachers themselves.
- The head of the department where the teacher works would also report the Departmental Activities performed by the teacher.
- The Principal of the institute would further add Institute Activities and the Annual Confidential Report (ACR) for every teacher.

#### **About Waste Management Accelerators for Women Entrepreneurs (Wawe) Summit 2019:**

- The Wawe Summit will be the largest gathering of young women students that will promote entrepreneurship in waste management and provide alternatives to single-use plastic carry bags.
- The Summit will be jointly organized by All India Council for Technical Education

(AICTE) and Institute of Waste Management (IIWM) at Jaipur.

- The theme of the summit is: "Make your own bag – empowering women to take up income generation activity and entrepreneurship in waste management, through making a business out of this record-creating concept.
- This conclave will be part of a series of activities to encourage entrepreneurship amongst young graduates.

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

- Waste Management Accelerators for Women Entrepreneurs summit was conducted.

#### **Source:**

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleseDetail.aspx?PRID=1585478>

## **8) Launch of KHANDERI:**

#### **About Scorpene Class submarines:**

- These are a class of diesel-electric attack submarines jointly developed by the French Direction des Constructions Navales (DCN) and the Spanish company Navantia, and now by Naval Group.
- It features diesel propulsion and additional air-independent propulsion (AIP).

#### **Introduction of KHANDERI:**

- The submarine 'KHANDERI' is named after the wide snouted Saw fish, a deadly sea predator of the great Indian Ocean.
- The first Submarine Khanderi was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 06th December 1968 and decommissioned on 18th October 1989 after more than 20 years of yeoman service to the nation. In true nautical tradition, she will now be 'reincarnated' by MDL (Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited) to guard the vast maritime area of our nation.
- INS Khanderi, the second indigenously built Scorpene submarine, was launched at the (MDL) in Mumbai. Khanderi is the second of the six submarines being built at MDL as part of Project 75 of Indian Navy.
- Khanderi has been launched into the water and after the trails it will be commissioned as INS Khanderi submarine into the Indian Navy for operational duty.

- Khanderi uses precision-guided weapons including torpedoes as well as tube-launched anti-ship missiles, which can be launched underwater or on surface. It can undertake multifarious types of missions typically undertaken by any modern submarine, i.e anti-surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, intelligence gathering, mine laying, area surveillance, etc.
- The submarine is designed to operate in all theatres, including the tropics. All means and communications are provided to ensure interoperability with other components of a naval task force.

#### Why in News?

- KHANDERI second indigenously built Scorpene submarine, was launched at the (MDL) in Mumbai.

#### Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1585578>.

### 9) Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana:

#### About PMMVY:

- It is a maternity benefit rechristened from erstwhile Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY). The IGMSY was launched in 2010.
- Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), a flagship scheme of the Government for pregnant women and lactating mothers has achieved a significant milestone by crossing one crore beneficiaries.
- The scheme is a conditional cash transfer scheme for pregnant and lactating women of 19 years of age or above for first live birth.
- It provides partial wage compensation to women for wage-loss during childbirth and childcare and to provide conditions for safe delivery and good nutrition and feeding practices.
- It also aims to improved health seeking behaviour amongst the Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers (PW&LM).
- The eligible beneficiaries would receive the remaining cash incentives as per approved norms towards maternity benefit under Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) after institutional delivery so that on an average, a woman will get Rs. 6000.

- Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Rajasthan are the top five States/UT in the country in implementation of PMMVY. Odisha and Telangana are yet to start implementation of the scheme.

#### Why in News?

- Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), a flagship scheme of the Government for pregnant women and lactating mothers has achieved a significant milestone by crossing one crore beneficiaries.

#### Source:

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1585592>

### 10) Kargil to Kohima (K2K) Ultra Marathon:

#### About K2K:

- Kargil to Kohima (K2K) Ultra marathon – Glory Run- To commemorate 20th year of Kargil Victory and to live up to the true tradition and motto of IAF i.e. “Touch the Sky with Glory”, a unique expedition Kargil to Kohima (K2K) Ultra-Marathon- “Glory Run” is being undertaken by IAF from Kargil War Memorial, Drass (J&K) to Kohima War Cemetery, Kohima (Nagaland).

#### Why Kargil to Kohima? :

- Kohima and Kargil are two formed most outposts of India in east and north where two of the most fierce battles of modern India were fought in 1944 and 1999. The event is to commemorate 20th year victory in Kargil war.

#### Objective:

- Aim of expedition is to promote awareness for safety of pedestrians and recently launched Fit India Movement by PM, along with paying tribute to bravehearts who made the supreme sacrifices.

#### Expedition Team:

- The composite team consisting of officers and airmen including one female officer Flight Lieutenant Rishab Jeet Kaur and Warrant Officer Indra Pal Singh,(51 years).
- The expedition is led by Squadron Leader Suresh Razdan who is a Su-30 aircraft pilot.

- The team will cover distance of more than 4500mm in 45 days by running an average of 100mm per day.

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

- Commemorate 20th year of Kargil Victory and to Live up to the true tradition and Mottor of IAF.

#### **Source:**

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1585752>

### **11) Admiral Karambir Singh Chief of the Naval Staff to Bangladesh:**

- CNS will be conducted for a tour of the Khulna Shipyard Limited, BN naval bases in Chattogram and Khulna and will also address cadets at the Bangladesh Naval Academy (BNA). In addition, he will participate in the first anniversary celebration of Bangladesh Institute of Maritime Research and Development (BIMRAD).
- The Bangladesh Navy is an active member of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and is a member of all three working groups, viz Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Maritime Security and 'Information Sharing and Interoperability'.

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

- Our Admiral Karambir Singh Chief of the Naval Staff to Bangladesh Naval Academy.

#### **Source:**

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1585737>

### **12) Emergency Response Support System:**

#### **About ERSS:**

- The services include the Emergency Response Support System (ERSS - Dial 112), 'E-Beat Book' System and the 'E-Saathi App'
- ERSS is one of the key projects of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs under Nirbhaya Fund. It has been designed to play a pivotal role in mitigation or preventing escalation of crime, especially against women and children.

- ERSS provides a single emergency number (112), computer aided dispatch of field resources to the location of distress. Citizens can send their emergency information through call, sms, and email and through the 112 India mobile app.

- There were more than 20 numbers that were running for the help of public for various emergency situations, which were creating confusion to the distress callers.

#### **About E-Beat Book:**

- It is a web and mobile based application which will ease the collection, updation and analysis of the information related to crime and criminals in a real time.
- The E-Beat Book would be linked with Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS), which would help in a real time updation of crime/criminal data
- The citizen can directly approach the 'Atal Sehbhagita Kendra' for redressal of their grievances and can render their suggestions too.

#### **About E-Saathi:**

- The 'E-Saathi' App would help the general public, including senior citizens, to remain in touch with the police and also give suggestions to facilitate participative community policing('Your Police at Your Doorstep' initiative)
- The beat officer would be able to provide services like passport verification, tenant verification, servant verification, character certification etc. at a click of a button through the app, without the people needing to visit the police station.
- With this initiative, on one hand, where the beat officer would become more efficient in his/her working, this would make police-people communication a two-way process, on the other

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

- Our Admiral Karambir Singh Chief of the Naval Staff to Bangladesh Naval Academy.

#### **Source:**

- <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetailm.aspx?PRID=1585706>

# News in Depth

## AIR NEWS

### 1) One year of AYUSHMAN BHARAT

#### About the scheme :

- The main aim of the scheme is to provide universal health care to the poor, needy and vulnerable sections of the country.
- The scheme provides a health cover of five lakh rupees annually to vulnerable families and aims at benefiting more than ten crore poor families all over the country.

#### Achievements during last one year:

- In the last one year, more than 46 lakh beneficiaries have availed cashless treatment under the scheme worth ₹7,500 crore with 60% of the amount being spent on tertiary care.
- This has resulted in saving of over 12 thousand crore rupees to the beneficiary families.

- Currently, 32 States and Union Territories are implementing the scheme and more than 10 crore beneficiary cards have been issued.
- Over eighteen thousand hospitals are providing services across the country, out of which more than 50 per cent are private hospitals.

#### Why in News ?

- Ayushman Bharat - the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana has completed one year of its launch. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had launched the scheme on September 23, 2019 from Ranchi, Jharkhand last year.
- Source: <http://www.newsonair.com/News?title=Ayushman-Bharat-scheme-completes-one-year-of-its-launch&id=371938>

# Hindu Editorial Analysis

## 1) Why is the Collegium of Supreme Court judge in the spotlight?

- GS Paper II – constitution and polity; judiciary; collegium system

### Context –

- The recent controversy over the transfer of the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, Justice Vijaya Kamlesh Tahilramani, to the Meghalaya High Court has once again brought to the fore a long-standing debate on the functioning of the ‘Collegium’ of judges that makes appointments and transfers in the higher judiciary.
- While sections of the Bar have questioned the transfer as well as the lack of transparency about the exact reason, the Supreme Court (SC) has issued an official statement that the Collegium indeed had cogent reasons and that these could be revealed, if necessary.

### How did the Collegium system come into being?

- It is a system under which judges are appointed by an institution comprising judges. The Collegium of judges is the Supreme Court’s invention and not discussed in the Constitution.
- The ‘First Judges Case’ (1981) ruled that the “consultation” with the CJI in the matter of appointments must be full and effective. However, it rejected the idea that the CJI’s opinion, albeit carrying great weight, should have primacy.
- The Second Judges Case (1993) introduced the Collegium system, holding that “consultation” really meant “concurrence”. It added that it was not the CJI’s individual opinion, but an institutional opinion formed in consultation with the two senior-most judges in the **Supreme Court**.
- Third Judges Case (1998) expanded the Collegium to a five-member body, comprising the CJI and four of his senior-most colleagues.

### What is the procedure followed by the Collegium?

- The President of India appoints the CJI and the other SC judges. As far as the CJI is concerned, the outgoing CJI recommends his successor by seniority. The Union Law Minister forwards the recommendation to the Prime Minister who, in turn, advises the President.
- For other judges of the top court, the proposal is initiated by the CJI. The CJI consults the rest of the Collegium members, as well as the senior-most judge of the court hailing from the High Court to which the recommended person belongs.
- The Collegium sends the recommendation to the Law Minister, who forwards it to the Prime Minister to advise the President.
- The Chief Justice of High Courts is appointed as per the policy of having Chief Justices from outside the respective States. The Collegium takes the call on the elevation. High Court judges are recommended by a Collegium comprising the CJI and two senior-most judges.
- The proposal, however, is initiated by the Chief Justice of the High Court concerned in consultation with two senior-most colleagues. The recommendation is sent to the Chief Minister, who advises the Governor to send the proposal to the Union Law Minister.

### Transfer of judges –

- The Collegium also recommends the transfer of Chief Justices and other judges. Article 222 of the Constitution provides for the transfer of a judge from one High Court to another. When a CJ is transferred, a replacement must also be simultaneously found for the High Court concerned. There can be an acting CJ in a High Court for not more than a month. In matters of transfers, the opinion of the CJI “is determinative”, and the consent of the judge concerned is not required. However, the CJI should take into account the views of the CJ of the High Court concerned and the views of one or more SC judges who are in a position to do so.

All transfers must be made in the public interest, that is, “for the betterment of the administration of justice”.

### Criticism

- Opaqueness and a lack of transparency, and the scope for nepotism are cited often. The mystique of the process, the small base from which the selections were made and the secrecy and confidentiality ensured that the process led to nepotism.”
- Embroilment in public controversies and having relatives practising in the same High Court could be common reasons for transfers.
- In respect of appointments, there has been an acknowledgement that the “zone of consideration” must be expanded to avoid criticism that many appointees hail from families of retired judges.

### Way forward

- 1. NJAC to be implemented
- 2. Collegium’s resolutions are posted online
- 3. New memorandum of procedure to infuse accountability.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/why-is-the-collegium-of-judges-in-the-spotlight/article29418574.ece>

## 2) Undesirable and divisive

- GS Paper I and II – society; regionalism; constitution and polity; official language; schedule VIII

### Context –

- Home Minister’s comments on making Hindi a common language in the country has heightened a tiff between different political parties, within parties and between South and North.

### The constitutional provisions

- PART XVII OFFICIAL LANGUAGE  
CHAPTER I.— LANGUAGE OF THE UNION
- 343. (1) The official language of the Union shall be Hindi in Devanagari script. The form of numerals to be used for the official purposes of the Union shall be the international form of Indian numerals.
- (2) Notwithstanding anything in clause
- (1), for a period of fifteen years from the commencement of this Constitution, the English language shall continue to be used for all the official purposes of the Union for which it was being used immediately

before such commencement: Provided that the President may, during the said period, by order<sup>1</sup> authorise the use of the Hindi language in addition to the English language and of the Devanagari form of numerals in addition to the international form of Indian numerals for any of the official purposes of the Union.

- (3) Notwithstanding anything in this article, Parliament may by law provide for the use, after the said period of fifteen years, of— (a) the English language, or (b) the Devanagari form of numerals, for such purposes as may be specified in the law.

### REGIONAL LANGUAGES

- The Constitution does not specify the official language of different states. The legislature of a state may adopt any one or more of the languages in use in the state or Hindi as the official language of that state. Until that is done, English is to continue as official language of that state. Under this provision, most of the states have adopted the major regional language as their official language. Notably, the choice of the state is not limited to the languages enumerated in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

### Protecting Language Diversity in India

- The Constitution of India has recognised **22 official languages**. Though officially there are 122 languages, Peoples Linguistic Survey of India has identified 780 languages, of which 50 are extinct in past five decades.
- The twenty two languages that are recognised by the Constitution are: Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kashmiri, Kannada, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santhali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu and Urdu are included in the Eighth Schedule of the constitution.
- Among these three languages, Sanskrit, Tamil and Kannada have been recognised as classical language with special status and recognition by Government of India. The classical languages have written and oral history of more than 1000 years. In comparison to these, English is very young as it has the history of only 300 years.

- The Constitution of India has included the clause to **protect minority languages** as a **fundamental right**. It states” Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part of thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same.”
- The language policy of India provides guarantee to protect the linguistic minorities. Under the Constitution provision is made for appointment of Special Officer for linguistic minority with the sole responsibilities of safeguarding the interest of language spoken by the minority groups.
- The first **linguistic survey** was conducted during 1894 to 1928 by George A. Grierson that identified 179 languages and 544 dialects. In the post-independence era Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), based in Mysore was assigned to carry out an in-depth survey of languages.
- In 1991 the Census of India listed 1576 mother tongues’ with separate grammatical structures and 1796 speech varieties that is classified as other mother tongues’.
- Another unique feature of India is the concept of protecting the interest of children to get basic education in their mother tongue. The Constitution provides” it shall be the endeavour of every State and of every local authority within the state to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups”.
- The 2017 theme of United Nations World Mother Language Day “to develop the potential of multilingual education to be acknowledged in education, administrative systems, cultural expression and cyber space”.
- In 1956 reorganisation of states in India was carried out with linguistic boundaries that had its own script. Sardar Vallab Bhai Patel, the then home minister played key role in formation and amalgamation of states based on linguistic attributes.
- The language policy of India has been pluralistic, giving priority to the use of

mother tongue in administration, education and other fields of mass communication. The Language Bureau of Ministry of Human Resource Development is set up to implement and monitor the language policy.

- <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/printrelease.aspx?relid=158532>

### 3) Why India’s growth is off the mark? And other economic

#### Context -

- The economic growth rate (quarterly) has been sliding for the last five quarters from 8% to 7% to 6.6% to 5.8% and now to 5%.
- The Economic Survey in July talked of a growth rate of 7% for the current year.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), in its August policy statement, talked of a slowdown to 6.9%, from the 7% predicted in June and 7.2% predicted before that.
- The Asian Development Bank cut its growth forecast from 7.2% to 7% in April 2019.
- Similar is the case with the IMF which cut its forecast for the year from 7.3% to 7%. So, they all talked of a 7% rate of growth when a year earlier it had fallen below that.
- On the other hand we as an economy are aspiring to reach a 5 trillion dollar economy by 2025. Henceforth it becomes necessary to analyse this slowdown and take up apt measures to bring back the growth trajectory.
- A recession is defined in economics as three consecutive quarters of contraction in GDP. But since India is a large developing economy, contraction is a rarity. The last instance of negative growth for India was in 1979. A growth recession is more commonplace where the economy continues to grow but at a slower pace than usual for a sustained period.

#### Why has there been a slowdown?

- **Major factors are -**
  - 1. Sluggish consumption
  - 2. Very low investment rate in spite of high stock market numbers and lowering of interest rates by RBI, investment is not picking up. Monitoring Indian Economy Pvt. Ltd. shows that investment proposals

are at a 14-year low. In the last year, the RBI has cut interest rates four times and by a total of more than 1%; but the investment rate has not budged.

- 3. The slackening of investment lowers the level of infrastructure development, causes hesitation in creating small businesses, stop entrepreneurs from investing in research and development, and thus stagnates technological development.
- 4. Unemployment high – automobile sector and other FMCG goods.
- 5. Rising NPAs even from the MSMEs and NBFCs.
- 6. The recent sharp fall in PFCE (private final consumption expenditure) in the June quarter to 3.1 per cent compared to 7.2 per cent in the March quarter has significantly contributed to the recent slowdown.

#### **Mechanism of consumption impacting growth**

- If consumption spending falls, then output and employment levels also fall since consumption expenditure directly impacts the other two. As a consequence, the economy would stagnate, and prices deflate. Lower prices, if unable to recover the costs, would halt the operations of any firm and would initiate the layoff process. This, in turn, reduces earnings further. Hence this vicious cycle keeps on repeating itself until the economy slips into a deeper state of shock.
- 7. **Exogenous factors** - A leading dampener is the US-China trade war, which has intensified over time and has contracted world trade and, in turn, Indian exports. Also, high rates of GST, liquidity crisis in NBFCs, and shift in the behavioural pattern of the workforce due to the entry of young people has discouraged savings. When people save less in the economy, it leaves less money for investments.

#### **Role of unorganized sector**

- This sector producing 45% of the output and employing 94% of the workforce has been in decline, which is pulling down the rate of growth of the economy.
- The data for this sector is collected once in five years (called reference years) and the data cannot be consolidated as for its

wide unorganized feature. Hence it is not reflected in the growth figures.

- To incorporate the unorganized sector, data from alternative sources need to be used. The decline in the workforce, the rise in the demand for work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, etc. suggests that the unorganised sector has declined by at least 10%.

#### **Sector-wise impact of economic slowdown**

- Impact of economic growth on major development goals — examples being improvement in education, health and overall human development/human capital formation; expansion in productive employment for all and environmentally sustainable development, etc — depends on the nature and composition of growth.
- 1. **Wealth distribution** - 1% of the wealthiest in India increased their share in wealth from 40% in 2010 to more than 60% in the last five years, and the richest 10% in India own more than four times wealth than the remaining 90%. Which means income inequality is widening.
- 2. **Education** - Economy is suffering from the highest ever unemployment rate. The literacy rate has grown very slowly and according to the United Nations, India's literacy was 71.1% in 2015. India is now far behind many African countries such as Rwanda, Morocco and Congo in terms of literacy.
- According to the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2018, about 70-74 % children (in the age group 6-14 years) go to school regularly; far fewer go to secondary school.
- There is an urgent need for a quantum jump in public expenditure on education in order to fill wide gaps in infrastructure, training and retraining of teachers and to ensure a strong follow up on the quality of education. The share of GDP in education has to be increased manifold.
- 3. **Health** - the decline in malnutrition, particularly among women and children is very slow; against the norm of 3% of GDP, the government spends around 1.5% of GDP on health

- 4. Severe depletion and degradation of environmental resources. A recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report has warned India of the seriousness of climate change and its severe adverse impact on the environment and the livelihood of masses.
- 5. **Agriculture** - Agriculture is in crisis today on account of rising costs of inputs and low prices of produces, and low public investments in this sector.
- Agricultural real wages are in decline and non-farm wages are constant if not declining; urban wages are also declining in recent years
- Crash in the aggregate demand in the economy.
- Need to increase public expenditure in investing in agriculture — in infrastructure, inputs, extension, marketing and storage and training — and in providing profitable prices to farmers.
- Raise funds for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act to push up demand by following a Keynesian approach.

#### **What are the structural reforms to be undertaken? A way forward**

- 1. Major focus should be on raising the aggregate demand and focusing on human capital formation.
- 2. Regularise contract, casual and “honorary” jobs and make them regular jobs. Increasing additional jobs for ensuring basic health and good quality education up to secondary level to all so that any meaningful skill formation is possible should be another aim.
- 3. Focus on promoting labour intensive sectors such as gems and jewellery, textiles and garments and leather goods.
- 4. A new tax refund scheme and greater priority sector lending for the export sector to incentivise exports.
- 5. Focus on optimum utilization of funds granted by RBI and direct them to boost investment in the economy both infrastructural and research investment.
- 6. Supply side measures like -rolling back some budgeted tax proposals, providing a stimulus package to industries, raising foreign direct investment flows, reducing Goods and

Services Tax to help industries. Also, reduction in repo rate by the Reserve Bank of India and asking banks to pass on reduced rates to customers, recapitalisation of banks by ₹70,000 crore to raise liquidity in the economy and other steps to ease credit flows to the economy. These are on the cards.

- 7. Structural shifts over the long run can be achieved through tapping into the health and education sectors that long for quality improvements. Only such long-lasting structural changes can improve the growth potential of the Indian economy and deter the possibility of three slowdowns within the short span of a decade.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/the-slow-climb-to-the-trillion-economy-peak/article29433451.ece>
- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/waiting-for-reforms/article29425184.ece>
- <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/indicators/the-dynamics-of-indias-growth-recession/articleshow/71020942.cms>
- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/why-indias-growth-figures-are-off-the-mark/article29425194.ece>

#### **4) Pipe dreams, ground reality**

- GS Paper I and III – Geography, water resources; Environmental conservation

##### **Context –**

- With the launch of Jal Jeevan Mission, let us analyse the issue of water crisis in India.

##### **Jal Jeevan abhiyan –**

- The Mission, under the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, aims to ensure **HarGharJal** हर घर जल- (piped water supply) to all rural households by 2024.
- It will focus on integrated demand and supply side management of water at the local level, including creation of local infrastructure for source sustainability like rainwater harvesting, groundwater recharge and management of household wastewater for reuse in agriculture.
- The **Jal Jeevan Mission** will converge with other Central and State Government

Schemes to achieve its objectives of sustainable water supply management across the country.

#### **The problem:**

- Over 70% of India's surface water (rivers and lakes) and groundwater is polluted hence it will be a costly affair to supplement the scheme with reverse osmosis system.
- It is therefore important to build a healthy water resource for our nation. The unpolluted sources of water that remain are the waters underlying the floodplains of rivers (for bulk water) and the subterranean natural mineral water underlying forest tracts (for drinking). These must be protected and conserved.

#### **A local and sustainable scheme: some newer techniques**

- The Yamuna **Palla floodplain scheme** for Delhi in 2009. It has been actively pursued by the Delhi Jal Board and provides quality water to more than a million people in Delhi. This local and sustainable river floodplain scheme can provide water supply for hundreds of river cities in India.
- Examples of self-sustaining floodplain water cities include Varanasi, Prayagraj, Agra, Mathura, most towns in Bihar and West Bengal, Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Amravati, Vijayawada, Rajahmundry, and many cities in Tamil Nadu.
- Floodplains can be secured by planting organic food forests or fruit forests which don't demand or consume much water.
- **Subterranean mineral water** - Unpolluted rain falls on the forest, percolates through the humus or leaf cover on the forest floor while picking up nutrients, and then through the underlying rock while picking up minerals. It finally settles in underground aquifers. This is natural mineral water, since this is high-quality natural mineral water purely for drinking; we need only 2-3 litres a day.
- The forest aquifer scheme can provide mineral water countrywide for a billion people. It can be distributed at nominal charge, ₹2-3 a litre, through Mother Dairy kiosks and other outlets as its total cost would be economical compared to bottled RO water.

#### **Way forward: Water Sanctuaries**

- The water levels of the floodplain aquifers need to be monitored scrupulously to be well above the river water level to avoid contamination by river water.
- We must maintain stable water levels for the subterranean forest aquifers to ensure sustainability. We need to declare the floodplains and forest aquifers as **water sanctuaries** similar to national parks and tiger reserves. If not, we will lose this amazing gift of natural infrastructure, as has already happened in some cases.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/pipe-dreams-ground-reality/article29442470.ece>

#### **5) Deadly spread**

- GS Paper II and III – social issues; health and science and technology

#### **Context –**

- With a 30% increase in measles cases worldwide in 2018, the World Health Organization, in January 2019, included 'vaccine hesitancy' as one of the 10 threats to global health this year.

#### **WHO has highlighted the threats such as:**

- 1) Outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases like measles and diphtheria
- 2) Increasing reports of drug-resistant pathogens
- 3) Growing rates of obesity and physical inactivity
- 4) The health impacts of environmental pollution and climate change
- 5) Multiple humanitarian crises.

#### **What is Vaccine hesitancy?**

- Vaccine hesitancy – the reluctance or refusal to vaccinate despite the availability of vaccines – threatens to reverse progress made in tackling vaccine-preventable diseases.
- Vaccination is one of the most cost-effective ways of avoiding disease – it currently prevents 2-3 million deaths a year and a further 1.5 million could be avoided if global coverage of vaccinations improved.
- Measles, for example, has seen a 30% increase in cases globally. The reasons for this rise are complex, and not all of these cases are due to vaccine hesitancy. However, some countries that were close

to eliminating the disease have seen resurgence.

#### **The reasons why people choose not to vaccinate are complex;**

- complacency,
- inconvenience in accessing vaccines,
- Lack of confidence is key reasons underlying hesitancy.
- Health workers, especially those in communities, remain the most trusted advisor and influencer of vaccination decisions, and they must be supported to provide trusted, credible information on vaccines.

#### **Steps taken for vaccine hesitancy in following areas:**

- In 2019, WHO will ramp up work to eliminate cervical cancer worldwide by increasing coverage of the HPV vaccine, among other interventions.

#### **Indian scenario**

- India has reported the maximum cases between July 2017 and June 2018. This increase is despite the fact that there is a massive global push for vaccination.
- The measles vaccine was introduced in India's Universal Immunisation Programme in 1985 and to further boost the program, a second dose was introduced in 2010 followed by a decision to introduce a combination vaccine for measles and rubella in February 2017 to replace the 2 doses of the measles vaccine.
- India has placed a target of measles elimination by 2020.
- <https://www.who.int/emergencies/ten-threats-to-global-health-in-2019>

### **6) Red Sea redlines and Yemen's inflection point (The Hindu – 18<sup>th</sup> sept)**

- GS Paper II – International relations; Middle East

#### **Context –**

- Attack on Saudi Arabia oil field, world energy infrastructure and related geopolitics, implication for India and its economy.

#### **Yemen conflict**

- Yemen is in the south-west corner of the Arabian Peninsula bordering Red Sea and Gulf of Aden.

- The north is hilly and fertile and has some oil reserves; the southern part is mostly deserted.
- With GDP per capita of \$944, Yemen's poverty is a sharp contrast to the oil-riches of her northern neighbors.
- The country is a tribal society with a strong sense of identity and kinship.
- Population of around 27 million, with most living in the north. the population in the north is mostly Zaidi which is closer to the Shia sect followed in **Iran**. The southerners are mostly Sunnis akin to a majority of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) citizens, the south which was colonised by the British to protect the sea route to India became relatively more westernised.

#### **The historical conflict**

- 1930 - North Yemen's Imam ceded to the resurgent Kingdom of **Saudi Arabia** three provinces that many Yemenis still considered theirs.
- 1960s - North Yemen passed through a six-year-long civil war between the Imam's fighters with Saudi support, against the Republican forces backed by Egypt.
- 1968 - Formation of Yemen Arab Republic as a result of civil war.
- 1990 - A united Republic of Yemen was established.
- 1994 - a section of the south tried to secede, but the insurrection was put down after a short civil war.
- 2004 - Northern Shia militia "Ansar Allah" began an insurgency led by Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi, head of the Zaidi sect, against President Ali Abdullah Saleh.
- 2011 - the Yemeni Arab Spring movement managed to remove Saleh who was replaced by his southern deputy Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi.
- 2014 - Al-Houthi's ousted Mr.Hadi
- 2015 - Coalition of Saudi Arabia, apprehensive of an al-Houthi led Yemen becoming a surrogate of Iran (a regional Shia rival), cobbled a military coalition comprising the **United Arab Emirates** (UAE), Egypt and other Sunni powers. This coalition began a military campaign ("Operation Decisive Storm") against the al-Houthis.
- 2017- Assassination of Saleh.

- The United Nations has described Yemen to be currently in the grip of the world's worst humanitarian catastrophe, with over 11,000 deaths and 3 million internally displaced.

#### **Implication in Geo-politics and India:**

- The Yemeni **civil war** is entering its endgame, crossing two watersheds which could cast a shadow over India's strategic national interests.

#### **1. The coordinated pre-dawn drone attacks on the two Saudi upstream oil facilities at Abqaiq and Khurais.**

- The strikes put 5.7 million barrels per day of crude production out of action over half of Saudi output and nearly 5% of global supplies.
- This caused an unprecedented 19% initial surge in oil prices, with Brent crude topping \$71 a barrel.
- In a worst case scenario of the hostilities escalating or long-term derailment of Saudi production, oil prices could rise above \$100 a barrel.
- These game-changing attacks showcase the efficacy of an asymmetric warfare. With most hydrocarbon assets in the Gulf region currently defenceless against such attacks, this vulnerability is a foretaste of any future conflict in this tension-prone region.

#### **2. The growing rift within the Saudi-led coalition**

- Withdrawing of UAE's forces from Yemen.
- The STC (Southern Transitional Council) calls for an independent South Yemen and is vehemently against the presence of Islamists in Yemen such as Islah party (member of Saudi-led coalition), al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and the Islamic State.
- Abu Dhabi has also been expanding its strategic presence in neighbouring Eritrea and Somaliland.
- If a viable South Yemeni state takes shape, the STC's symbiotic ties with the UAE would put Abu Dhabi in the driving seat along the geo-strategic Bab al-Mandeb Strait — a choke point connecting the Arabian Sea with the Red Sea onwards to the Suez Canal.

#### **India's interest**

- India's west bound trade passes through bab-al-mandab.

- India importing more than two-thirds of its oil from West Asia, a price surge is expected to impact the current account, and will result in further currency. A rise of oil price by even a dollar raises India's annual oil bill by \$1.5 billion, the country having spent \$112 billion on crude imports in 2018-19.
- Higher fuel costs and the imported inflation could also hurt the consumer at a time of a slowdown in the economy.
- A highly volatile oil market and a tense regional situation would also affect India's thriving economic engagements as well as its manpower.
- The attacks could affect Saudi Aramco's ongoing negotiations of two major upstream investments in India totalling over \$30 billion with Reliance Industries and the proposed Ratnagiri Refinery, respectively.

#### **Way forward**

- Frontloading India's biofuel programme
- Expanding its strategic petroleum reserves and diversifying its crude sources away from the West Asia.
- Building alternative energy resources like renewable energy.
- Re-evaluating the excise duties on petroleum products.
- Much of our infrastructure could be vulnerable to copy-cat attacks using such affordable and effective platforms available virtually off-the-shelf internationally.
- India's defence and security experts need to urgently devise counter measures to mitigate such vulnerabilities due to drone attack.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/fire-to-fuel/article29442564.ece>
- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/red-sea-redlines-and-yemens-inflection-point/article29442597.ece>

#### **7) A rural stimulus**

- GS paper III – Economy; agriculture; income and employment

#### **Context –**

- Staring at a slump in rural demand and a slowdown in the rural economy, the Centre plans to inject more money into the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

scheme by linking wages under the Act to an updated inflation index, which will be revised annually.

#### Analysis

- The current national average wage is about ₹178 per day.
  - The basket of items whose prices are tracked for constructing the Consumer Price Index for Agricultural Labourers (CPI-AL), for instance, has not been updated for at least three decades.
  - Rural expenditure patterns have altered significantly in the intervening period, making space for higher spending on services such as education, transport and Telecom.
  - The data recorded for wages mostly comprises only food prices. Its Effect could be accentuated when low food inflation coincides with decelerating farm incomes that still drive India's rural economy.
  - The Reserve Bank of India, in its annual report, has pointed to weakening rural demand since the third quarter of 2018-19 as a serious concern and termed reviving consumption as its top policy priority.
- Reflecting rural distress, demand for work under the MGNREGA has been rising.

#### Way forward

- A new basket is to be constructed, the Statistics Ministry, along with the Labour Bureau, to improve the currency of the CPI-AL (to which MGNREGA wages are linked) and CPI-Rural indices with annual reviews.
- Implementing the Swaminathan committee recommendation for C2 cost for MSP. C2 is a comprehensive measure of cultivation costs that includes the imputed cost of capital and the rent on the land.
- Increasing the money supply in the rural economy which will boost the consumption and work on the demand side problem of the economic slowdown.
- Revival of the automobile industry would also supplement the process of achieving income security by way of employment.
- Easing up the micro-finance infrastructure and NBFC problems will solve the credit crunch.
- <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/a-rural-stimulus/article29471581.ece>

# RSTV Big Picture

## 1) ENERGY SECURITY: THE CRUDE REALITY

### CONTEXT -

- Global oil prices surged the most on record after a strike on a Saudi Arabian oil facility removed about 5% of global supplies, an attack the US has blamed on Iran.
- State energy producer Saudi Aramco lost about 5.7 million barrels per day of output on Saturday after 10 unmanned aerial vehicles struck the world's biggest crude-processing facility in Ab-qaiq and the kingdom's second-biggest oil field in Khurais.
- Meanwhile, The United States has issued satellite images and cited intelligence to back its claim that Iran was behind attacks on the oil facilities. Iran denies involvement in the air attacks, which were claimed by Iran-aligned Houthi rebels in Yemen.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION -

- International Politics have always been affected by disruptions to Oil Fields and Supply, like the 1979 Iranian revolution, Kuwait attacks by Saddam Hussain in 1990.
- The Middle-East is in a state of flux, due the War in Yemen from 2015 and Attacks on Djibouti. The Regional Factors, like the Houthis, Shias and the Yemen factor also play role in driving up the rhetoric.
- This Attack also comes at a crucial time as US- Iran Relations indicate brighter prospects, but the US has now pointed Iran to be involved.

### CONCERNS OF INDIA-

- India Imports more than 80% of its crude oil consumption and 70% of it is from the Middle East, in which Saudi Arabia is the top supplier since many years.
- Saudi Arabia is the largest exporter in the world, exporting more than 10 million barrels/day. Saudi, also leads OPEC.
- Saudi Arabia produces 10 million barrels of oil per day that is 10% of the global oil market.

- OPEC has recently cut down production, on Saudi's insistence.
- Due to India's dependence on imports, any disturbance or dislocation can affect India adversely.
- More than the supply (because the attacked facility can be brought back to full steam in 15 days to month), the price volatility is a major concern.
- Countries like China and US have about 90 days of usage as strategic petroleum reserves. India being the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest importer has about 10 million tonnes of Strategic reserves which can last for 10-15 days.
- India can also depend on Reliance refinery, PSU Refineries, Bharat and Hindustan petroleum and IOC.

### OTHER CONCERNS -

- The Global Economy not in a great shape, with the US, Russia pumping more oil than they had in past. The Present Scenario can lead to more uncertainty and Price fluctuations.
- Risk premiums on oil fields could be more.
- Strait of Hormuz is a strategic channel as more than 20% oil supply flows. Iran, threatens to close it due to continued attacks.
- For the foreseeable future it nullifies the US-Iran communications and relations.
- There could be panic among the Indian diaspora in the middle-east and possible pressure on the Indian Government to handle the population there.

### WAY FORWARD -

- Saudi Arabia can consider Missile drone shields for resource & processing protection.
- US-Iran diplomacy should be worked out and push for effective communication.
- India should chart out a Medium term strategy & Long term strategy. It should work to reduce crude oil dependency, increase renewable energy sources, R& D in coal, nuclear energy and chart out a clean coal mechanism.

- Review India's Iran policy as far as oil is concerned. The Sanctions should not affect the Oil imports from Iran, particularly considering the bilateral ties and Easy Access between India and Iran.
- India-US diplomacy can be concentrated upon, particularly on Iran sanctions, oil imports from Iran.

#### **CONCLUSION -**

- Geopolitics always affects oil supplies and prices. The situation creates uncertainty thus price volatility is here to stay as it's going to create a psychological shortage & impact. India needs to plan for Research & Development in coal and review its renewable energy areas, increase the Non-conventional energy resources in its energy basket.

## **2) POK- THE UNFINISHED AGENDA -**

#### **CONTEXT -**

- Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) belongs to India, which expects to gain physical control over the region one day, external affairs minister S Jaishankar said against the backdrop of heightened tensions with Pakistan on the Kashmir issue.
- Terrorism is the only issue India is willing to discuss with Pakistan, and the world community understands that the changes made in Jammu & Kashmir are an internal matter and aimed at tackling issues such as cross-border terrorism, Jaishankar said, addressing his first news conference.

#### **SIGNIFICANCE-**

- The Region of Pakistan occupied Kashmir is an integral part of India has been the consistent policy of India since 1947. The legality of the transfer of the territory of Jammu and Kashmir to India, through the
- Punjabis and Pathans, through external interventions and state connivance, should be handled effectively.
- Harness the discontentment present in the POK region. Due to the complex demographics of Gilgit baltistan which consist of Shias, Sunnis, Nurbakshis and other sectarian minorities, the fundamentalism of Pakistan was met with

instrument of accession is unquestionable in this regard.

- After the Modification of Article 370, it resulted in a complete change in the status of Jammu and Kashmir with in India.
- The present stand by the Government shows its commitment to fulfilling the parliamentary resolutions and in taking up a strong proactive approach towards it.
- Earlier Indian Policy towards POK was more on the defensive side, due to several reasons, one of them being the sensitivity attached to the Kashmir issue within India.
- Gilgit Baltistan is one of the most strategic locations and connects India to Afghanistan and Central India. The Development of this region has been abysmal and also huge demographic changes induced by Pakistan.
- Pakistan occupied Kashmir includes Gilgit baltistan and AJK region (mirpur-Muzaffarabad areas). AJK includes less than 50% PoK, while more than 85% of the territory occupied by Pakistan is in Gilgit baltistan.
- China's flagship project CPEC- China Pakistan Economic corridor passes through Gilgit baltistan. However, no major infrastructure project came in so far other than road connectivity, which shows the wariness of china towards investing in this region.
- Till 2009, Gilgit Baltistan was treated like a colony and did not have local self government. Even After, the Government concerned to the region has no power to take any decisions vis a vis the region.

#### **WAY FORWARD -**

- The Changed demographic of POK, after the settling of Ex-servicemen, some resistance particularly after Gilgit baltistan order 2018.
- There will be attempts by the Pakistan to try to project the Kashmir region as Human rights violated region in the UN General Assembly.
- The Battle should now be taken up on the other side of the Line of Control, to act proactively and address the terrorist infiltration to the northern part of J&K.