

OFFICERS'

Pulse

ISSUE NO. 2 | 17TH JUNE TO 23RD JUNE

At a Glance.

Autonomous District Councils
Crimes Against Children
Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
Liquor Prohibition
Urban Forestry..

In Depth.

Trade War
Ayushman Bharath
Rationalising Tax Structure
Merger of Banks
MSME Pulse Report..

**CURRENT AFFAIRS
WEEKLY**

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



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News @ a glance

Polity & Social Issues

Autonomous district councils

What are autonomous district councils?

- The 6th schedule of the constitution deals with administration of tribal areas of 4 North Eastern states (Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya and Mizoram) and the tribal areas in these 4 states have been constituted as autonomous districts.

Salient features of ADCs

- The governor is empowered to organise and re-organise these districts.
- Each autonomous district has a district council of 30 members of which 4 are nominated and 26 are elected.
- The district and regional councils can make laws on certain subjects like land, forests, marriage, social customs etc and they can also administer justice.
- The councils can establish primary schools, dispensaries, markets etc and assess and collect land revenue and impose certain taxes.
- The acts of parliament or state legislature either do not apply to autonomous districts or apply with certain modifications.

Why in news?

- The Chief Executive of Mizoram Chakma Autonomous District Council met the Minister for Development of North East.
- The agenda included discussions about the Border Area Development Programme (BADP).
- Chakma Autonomous Development Council is situated on the International Border with Bangladesh in the West and Myanmar in the South, which makes it strategically important area, calling for special attention.

Who are Chakmas?

- Chakmas are ethnic people predominantly Buddhists found in northeast India, West Bengal, Bangladesh, and Myanmar. They are also known as Changma.

What is Border Area Development Programme (BADP)?

- BADP was launched in 1987.
- To meet the special development needs of the people living in remote and inaccessible areas near the international western border with Pakistan.
- Later the scheme was introduced in all border areas, including the North East.

Objectives of BADP

- Create infrastructure in border areas.
- Provide economic opportunities to people living in the vicinity of the border.
- Instil a sense of security among the people living in border areas.

NITI Aayog

What is NITI Aayog?

- The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) is the premier policy 'Think Tank' of the Government of India.
- Formed through a resolution of the Union Cabinet in 2015.
- Replaced the planning commission.
- An extra-constitutional, non-statutory and advisory body.
- Provides both directional and policy inputs.

Why in news?

- The fourth governing council meeting of Niti Aayog was conducted.

Composition of NITI Aayog

- Prime Minister (Chairperson)
- Governing Council (CMs of all the States and UTs with legislatures, and Lt. Governor of other UTs)
- Regional Councils

- Formed on need basis, to address specific issues impacting more than one state or a region.
- Has a specified tenure.
- Convened by the PM & comprise of the CMs of States and Lt. Governors of UTs in the region.
- Chaired by the Chairperson of the NITI Aayog or his nominee.
- Experts, specialists and practitioners with relevant domain knowledge as special invitees nominated by the Prime Minister

The full-time organizational framework:

- Vice-Chairperson: appointed by Prime Minister
- Members: Full-time
- Part-time members: Maximum of 2 from leading universities & relevant institutions, on a rotational basis.
- Ex Officio members: Maximum of 4 members from the Union Ministers, nominated by the PM.
- Chief Executive Officer: Appointed by the PM, for a fixed tenure, in the rank of Secretary.
- Secretariat as deemed necessary.

Agriculture extension services

Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK)

- The first KVK was established in 1974 at Puducherry.
- KVKs provide several farm support activities like providing technology dissemination to farmers, training, awareness etc.
- There are 642 KVKs, out of which, 435 are under State Agricultural Universities (SAU) and Central Agricultural University (CAU), 55 are under ICAR Institutes, 100 under NGOs, 35 under State Governments, and the remaining 17 under other educational institutions.

DD Kisan

- DD Kisan is an Indian agriculture 24-hour television channel, owned by Doordarshan
- Was launched on 26 May 2015.
- Disseminates real-time inputs to farmers on new farming techniques, water

conservation and organic farming among other information.

Common Service Centre

- Common Service Centres (CSC) is one of the mission mode projects under the Digital India Programme.
- The access points for delivery of essential public utility services, social welfare schemes, healthcare, financial, education and agriculture services, apart from host of B2C services to citizens in rural and remote areas of the country.
- A pan-India network catering to regional, geographic, linguistic and cultural diversity of the country, thus enabling the mandate for a socially, financially and digitally inclusive society.

Why in news?

- Prime Minister will interact directly with farmers across the country through video bridge.
- It will be broadcast directly by Krishi Vigyan Kendra's, Common Service Centres (CSC), Doordarshan, DD Kisan and Aakashvaani from all over the country.

Common Review Mission (CRM) report

What is Common Review Mission report?

- Annual Common Review Mission is one of the monitoring mechanisms under National Health Mission.

Why in news?

- Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare released the 11th Common Review Mission (CRM) report of the National Health Mission.
- It is found that the 'Maternal Mortality Ratio' of India has declined from 167 in 2011-2013 to 130 in 2014-2016 (highest percentage decline)

Scope of the report

- The CRM report uses a mix of methods-including secondary data review, rapid assessment of facilities, and implementer and beneficiary perspectives.
- The 11th CRM team visited 16 States/UTs, of which 4 were North-Eastern States,

6 were High Focus States and 6 were Non-High Focus States.

What is National Health Mission?

- The NHM envisages achievement of universal access to equitable, affordable & quality health care services that are accountable and responsive to people's needs.
- The National Health Mission (NHM) encompasses two Sub-Missions, the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM) and the newly launched National Urban Health Mission (NUHM).
- The main programmatic components include:
 - Health System Strengthening in rural and urban areas
 - Reproductive-Maternal- Neonatal- Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A)
 - Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases.

Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR)

- The number of female deaths per 100,000 live births irrespective of the duration and site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management but not from accidental or incidental causes



Infant Mortality Rate (IMR)

- Infant mortality rate (IMR) is the number of deaths per 1,000 live births of children under one year of age.

Total Fertility Rate (TFR)

- Total Fertility Rate is the average number of children that a woman bears over her reproductive span.
- The reproductive age span of women taken for statistical purpose is between 15-49 years.

- A Total Fertility Rate of 2.1 is considered to be a Replacement Rate, i.e. the rate at which a given population is able to produce enough offspring to replace itself.

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay National Welfare Fund For Sportspersons

About the fund

- Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay National Welfare Fund for Sportspersons (PDUNWFS) was set up in March, 1982
- To assist outstanding Sportspersons of yesteryear, living in indigent circumstances that had brought glory to the Country in sports.
- Revised in May, 2016 to provide for lump sum ex-gratia assistance to outstanding Sportspersons of yesteryears or their families for medical treatment etc.

Why in news?

- Sports Minister sanctions a special financial assistance of Rs. 5 lakhs for former International Archer Limba Ram.

Limba Ram

- Indian archer who represented India in three Olympics
- He equalled an archery world record in 1992 at the Asian Archery Championships in Beijing
- The Government of India honoured him with the Arjuna award in 1991 and Padma Shri in 2012.



Mizos urged to have more children

Current situation

- The annual population growth in Mizoram, about 1.6%, is below the national mark of 2.37% recorded in the 2011 census.

- Illegal migrants from Bangladesh, Myanmar and infiltration of Chakmas have entered Mizoram.

Impact of outsiders

- Work is taken up by migrant workers and labourers.
- There is a fear that the non-tribal migrants could outnumber the indigenous people in their near future.

What's in news?

- The Young Mizo Association has given call for a baby boom to ensure Mizos fill up the space taken up by migrants.

Is it the first time?

- A decade ago, Meghalaya had announced cash incentives are for women with 15 children and more.

What is baby boom?

- A baby boom is a period marked by a significant increase of birth rate.
- This demographic phenomenon is usually ascribed within certain geographical bounds.

Ceasefire ends

What is ceasefire?

- Ceasefire is a temporary stoppage of a war in which each side agrees with the other to suspend aggressive actions.
- Ceasefires may be declared as part of a formal treaty, but they have also been called as part of an informal understanding between opposing forces.

Why in news?

- The government has decided not to extend the suspension of operations (*Operation All Out*) in Jammu and Kashmir and that operations against terrorists would resume.
- The Hurriyat leaders staunchly oppose the centre's moves of recalling the ceasefire.

Who are Hurriyat?

- All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) is an alliance of 26 political, social and religious organizations
- Formed on March 9, 1993, as a united political front to raise the cause of Kashmiri separatism.

- This alliance has historically been viewed positively by Pakistan as it contests the claim of the Indian government over the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

Safai Karamcharis

Who are Safai Karamcharis?

- Safai Karamcharis are manual scavengers engaged in or employed for manually carrying/cleaning human excreta such as septic tank cleaning, sewage cleaning and railway track cleaning.



Why in news?

- Chairman of National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) discusses various issues of Safai Karamcharis of New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) With Chairman, NDMC.

National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK)

- The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) was constituted in 1994 as a statutory body by an Act of Parliament viz. 'National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993

Functions

- Recommend to the Central Government specific programmes of action towards elimination of inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities for Safai Karamcharis.
- Study and evaluate the implementation of the programmes and schemes relating to the social and economic rehabilitation of Safai Karamcharis.
- To study and monitor the working conditions, including those relating to

health, safety and wages of Safai Karamcharis.

- Make reports to the Central or State Governments on any matter concerning Safai Karamcharis.

NDLI

What is National Digital Library of India (NDLI)?

- NDLI is a project under the National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NMEICT).
- Launched by Ministry of HRD
- Developed by IIT Kharagpur.

Why in news?

- Union HRD Minister dedicated the National Digital Library of India to the Nation.

Objective

- The objective of NDL is to make digital educational resources available to all citizens of the country free of cost, to empower, inspire and encourage learning.

About NDLI

- NDLI is the Single Window Platform that collects and collates metadata from premier learning institutions in India and abroad, as well as other relevant sources.
- A digital repository containing all kinds of learning media such as textbooks, articles, videos, audio books, lectures, simulations, etc.
- Anybody can access the digital library anytime, anywhere absolutely free.
- This initiative will contribute greatly to the Government's commitment towards "Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat".

Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat

- A sub-programme of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
- Launched in August, 2014
- Special focus on improving language development and to create interest in mathematics.
- The 2 tracks of the programme are:
 - Early reading and writing with comprehension (ERWC)-To improve language development

- Early mathematics (EM)-To create a natural and positive interest in mathematics related to their physical and social world.

World's Tallest Girder Rail Bridge

What is a Girder Bridge?

- Girder Bridge is the most commonly built and utilized bridge in the world.
- It uses girders (beams) as the means of supporting the deck.
- Other types of rail bridges: Arch Bridge, Truss Bridge, Beam Bridge, etc.

Why in news?

- Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL) has supplied steel material for the 111-km-long Jiribam-Tupul-Imphal new broad gauge railway project in Manipur.
- A bridge is being constructed near Noney, Manipur will become the tallest girder rail bridge in the world.

About the bridge

- At 141 metres, the bridge over river Iring will be as high as two Qutub Minar's stacked on top of each other.

Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL)

- SAIL is an Indian state-owned steel making company based in New Delhi, India. It is a public sector undertaking, owned and operated by the Government of India.
- With an annual production of 14.38 million metric tons, SAIL is the largest steel producer in India and one of the largest steel producers in the world.
- SAIL operates and owns 5 integrated steel plants at Bhilai, Rourkela, Durgapur, Bokaro and Burnpur(Asansol) and 3 special steel plants at Salem, Durgapur and Bhadravathi.



Aspirational Districts Programme

What is Aspirational Districts Programme?

- Launched in January 2018.
- Aims to quickly and effectively transform selected (backward) districts: 115/712 districts from 28 states (except Goa)
- Includes 35 Left Wing Extremism-affected districts

About the programme

- Focuses on improving people's ability to participate fully in the burgeoning economy.
- The scheme has no additional financial burden
- Ranking is undertaken on the basis of 49 indicators (81 data points) across health, education, infrastructure, agriculture, financial inclusion and skill development
- Real-time ranking is expected to bring in competition among districts, resulting in improvement of social parameters.

Agencies involved

- An Empowered Committee convened by the CEO of NITI Aayog will help in the convergence of various government schemes and streamlining of efforts.
- Officers at the level of Joint Secretary / Additional Secretary have been nominated to become the 'Central Prabhari Officers'
- States have appointed state-nodal and Prabhari officers

Why in news?

- HRD Minister has urged the District Education Officers to play a key role in transforming Aspirational districts in to developed districts.

Gram Swaraj Abhiyan

What is Gram Swaraj Abhiyan?

- A high-intensity outreach programme to deliver welfare schemes to select villages which need particular attention.
- Aims for 100% coverage of seven schemes launched by Central Government for eligible beneficiaries.

Schemes under Gram Swaraj Abhiyan

1. Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana
 - To provide free LPG connections to BPL households

2. Ujala scheme
 - To promote efficient lighting & enhance awareness on using efficient equipment
3. Saubhagya Scheme
 - Free electricity connections to all rural households & to the urban poor.
4. Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana
 - To make affordable access to financial services and for financial inclusion.
5. Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana
 - A government-backed Life insurance scheme
6. Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana
 - A government-backed accident insurance scheme
7. Mission Indradhanush
 - To accelerate the process of immunization by covering 5% and more children every year

NHRR, NHP, CBHI, NCD

National Health Resource Repository (NHRR)

- Country's first ever national healthcare facility registry of authentic, standardized and updated geo-spatial data of all public and private healthcare establishments

What NHRR does?

- Creates a reliable, unified registry of Country's healthcare resources showing the distribution pattern of health facilities and services between cities and rural areas.
- Identifies key areas of improvement by upgrading existing health facilities or establishing new health facilities keeping in view the population density, geographic nature, health condition, distance, etc.
- Generates real-world intelligence to identify gaps in health and service ratios, and ensures judicious health resource allocation and management.

National Health Profile (NHP)-2018

- Prepared by Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI)
- Covers demographic, socio-economic, health status and health finance indicators, along with comprehensive information on health infrastructure and human resources in health.

- NHP is an important tool in designing various programmes such as Free Drugs and Diagnostics and Mission Parivar Vikas.

Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI)

- Established in 1961 under the Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health
- To strengthen Health Information System (HIS) to ensure evidence based decision making in the Health Sector.

Non-Communicable Disease (NCD)

- A non-communicable disease (NCD) is a medical condition or disease that is not caused by infectious agents (non-infectious or non-transmissible).
- NCDs can refer to chronic diseases which last for long periods of time and progress slowly.
- Sometimes, NCDs result in rapid deaths such as seen in certain diseases such as autoimmune diseases, heart diseases, stroke, cancers, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, osteoporosis, Alzheimer's disease, cataracts, and others.

Why in news?

- Union Minister of Health released the National Health Profile (NHP)-2018 prepared by the Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI) and National Health Resource Repository (NHRR).

Crimes against Children

Why in news?

- Minister of Women and Child Development launched the “Handbook on legal processes for Police in respect of Crime against Children”.

What is the handbook about?

- A composite tool to aid the Police to chart a step-by-step procedure to follow in cases of crimes against children.
- Developed and published by Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) and Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D)
- A short documentary “Komal” has been released in this regard.

What is ‘Komal’ about?

- A short documentary on child sexual abuse to sensitize the children on “good and bad touch”.



Multiple initiatives in education sector

Why in news?

- HRD Minister says, 33 new initiatives have been taken by the Government in the last four years to strengthen the education system: NAS, SWAYAM, Smart India Hackathon, GIAN, NIRF, Samagra Siksha Scheme

National Achievement Survey (NAS)

- A research study undertaken to assess the quality and health of the school education in the country based on student learning outcomes.
- It is the largest ever national assessment survey, and it focuses on government and government aided schools.
- It is conducted throughout the country
- It is a transparent and credible exercise done under third party verification.

Uses of the findings

- Will help in understanding the efficiency of the education system.
- To design Classroom interventions.
- Help guide education policy, planning and for improving learning levels of children and bringing about qualitative improvements.

Study Webs of Active –Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM)

- A programme of Ministry of HRD, designed to achieve the three cardinal principles of Education Policy viz., access, equity and quality.

- An instrument for self-actualisation providing opportunities for a life-long learning.
- All courses would be offered free of cost under this programme however fees would be levied in case learner requires certificate.

Objective

- To take the best teaching learning resources to all, including the most disadvantaged.
- To bridge the digital divide for students who have hitherto remained untouched by the digital revolution.

Smart India Hackathon

- Launched by MHRD
- To reach out to all technology institutions in the country and challenge students to offer innovative solutions to some of the daunting problems faced by our country.
- Harnessing creativity and technical expertise from technology institutes in remote parts of India.
- Help build a funnel for 'Startup India, Standup India' campaign.
- Institutionalize a model for harnessing the creativity and skills of youth for nation-building.

Global Initiative of Academic Networks (GIAN) Scheme

- To boost the quality of higher education in India through international collaboration.
- Facilitate participation of high quality international academicians for delivering short-term courses and programs in Indian institutions.

National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF)

- NIRF was approved by the MHRD and launched in 2015.
- Outlines a methodology to rank institutions across the country.
- Parameters for ranking broadly cover "Teaching, Learning and Resources," "Research and Professional Practices," "Graduation Outcomes," "Outreach and Inclusivity," and "Perception".

Samagra Shiksha scheme

- Aims at unifying learning from pre-school to class 12 levels by treating education holistically as continuum from pre-school to class 12.
- Encapsulates elements of previous scheme and focuses on digital education by giving emphasis on integration of two Ts - Teacher and Technology.

Objectives

- Quality education
- Enhancing learning outcomes
- Bridging social and gender gaps in school education
- Promoting vocationalisation of education
- Strengthening teacher education institutions
- Providing annual grant for strengthening of libraries

Police vassalage

What is vassal?

- A vassal is a person regarded as having a mutual obligation to a lord or monarch
- This system was prevalent in medieval Europe

Police vassalage

- It is the misemployment of police officers in the houses of ranking officers.
- Subordinate officers are used to provide menial services and escort to family members of their superiors.

Why in news?

- The Kerala government has resolved to end the practice of vassalage in the police department

Liquor prohibition

What is liquor prohibition?

- It is a complete ban on sale and consumption of liquor.
- Article 47 of our constitution state that the state shall endeavour to bring about prohibition of intoxicating drinks and drugs.

Why in news?

- After prohibition, people of Bihar are spending more on good clothes and food.

Effects of prohibition in Bihar

- Sale of cheese has increased by 200%, honey by 380% and sale of expensive saris by 1751% and expensive dress material by 910%.

Other states with prohibition

- Gujarat
- Nagaland
- Lakshadweep

National testing agency

- Union Ministry of Human Resource Development (HRD) has announced National Testing Agency as an autonomous testing organization to conduct entrance examinations for higher educational institutions in India.
- The new body will take over all examinations from the CBSE, except the 10th and 12th board examinations.
- It will be headed by a Director General with tenure of 5 years.

Why in news?

- The National Testing Agency from now on, will also train paper setters to set better question papers and provide better model answers.

Risk of cardiovascular diseases

What is a cardiovascular disease?

- A cardiovascular disease is a class of diseases that involve the heart or blood vessels. Includes diseases such as coronary artery diseases, myocardial infarction (heart attack), stroke, heart failure etc.

Why in news?

- A study was conducted based on two recent national surveys District Level Household Survey-4 and Annual Health Survey (AHS) to find the risks of cardiovascular diseases.
- The survey was conducted on nearly 8,00,000 adults aged between 34 and 70 years.

Findings

- Kerala was at the highest risk with 19.5% and Jharkhand had the least risk of 13.2% of cardiovascular diseases.

- Women in Goa were at highest risk with 16.73% while men in Himachal Pradesh and Nagaland were at highest risk with 24.23%.
- Adults living in urban areas in Kerala were at highest risk with 19.9% followed by West Bengal with 19.12% and Himachal Pradesh with 18.97%. Daman and Diu had the lowest mean risk with 12.60% followed by Bihar (13.63%) and Arunachal Pradesh (14.71%).
- Cardiovascular diseases in is lower in rural areas compared to urban areas except for the state of Goa.
- Smoking was the more prevalent in poorer households and rural areas, wealthy households and urban locations faced risks from high body mass index, high blood glucose and high systolic blood pressure.

District Level Household Survey (DLHS)

- DLHS is undertaken by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- Was launched in response to the need for district-level data on the Reproductive and Child Health Programme

UWIN Platform

Unorganized Workers Identification Number (UWIN) & its origins

- UWIN Platform aims to create a national database and Aadhaar-seeded identification number system to facilitate welfare delivery to 40 crore workers in the sector
- The Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act, 2008 envisaged a portable smart ID card for unorganized workers.
- The "single unified sanitized database" will assign a ten-digit UWIN to every worker and include details of both nuclear and extended families of unorganized workers.

Why in news?

- Centre has started work to create a national database and Aadhaar-seeded identification number system to facilitate welfare delivery to 40 crore workers in the sector.

Economy

AIIB

What is Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)?

- AIIB is multilateral development bank initiated by China
- Established in December 2015 and headquartered at Beijing, china
- Provides finance to infrastructure development & regional connectivity projects in Asia-Pacific region
- Has 84 members including India.
- Has an authorised capital of US \$100 billion
- China is largest shareholder of AIIB with 26.06% voting shares.
- India with 7.5% vote share is second largest shareholder followed by Russia, Germany and South Korea.
- It prioritises investment in energy, power generation, transport, rural infrastructure, environmental protection and logistics in Asia

Why in news?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the third annual meeting of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) on June 26

Fugitive Tag

Who is a fugitive economic offender?

- Person who left the country to avoid prosecution and refuses to return back to India, despite an arrest warrant against him/her for economic offences

Why in news?

- Enforcement Directorate filed an application at the PMLA Court to declare Vijay Mallya as a fugitive economic offender and sought to confiscate his properties, estimated to be worth Rs. 12,500 crore.

Laws that prosecute such offenders

- SARFESI, Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions and Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC).
- However, if person absconds from India, in that case, these laws are not that much effective.
- To provide an effective constitutionally permissible deterrent, Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill 2017 is proposed.

Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill 2017

- The Bill aims to stop economic offenders who leave the country to avoid due process. Offences involving amounts of Rs. 100 crore or more fall under this group.

Who declare offender?

- A Director, appointed by the central government, will have to file an application to a Special Court to declare a person as a 'fugitive economic offender'.

Once property is confiscated, can the offender file a civil claim?

- No. Section 11 of the Act disqualifies those declared as offenders from either filing or defending a civil claim in court.



Electric Vehicle Transformation

National Electric Mobility Mission Plan (NEMMP) 2020

- It aims to achieve national fuel security by promoting hybrid and electric vehicles in the country
- It has set an ambitious target of 6-7 million sales of hybrid and electric vehicles year on year from 2020 onwards.

Why in News?

- According to a recent report, a transformational shift is expected with the deployment of electric vehicles (EV) in India.

Effect of EV transformation on auto-parts manufacturers

- EV is relatively simpler to build with only 20 moving parts against around 2,000 in an ICE (internal combustion engine) vehicle.
- This would have a significant impact on the automakers while also disrupting the supplier ecosystem.

Dhanush artillery gun

What is artillery?

- Artillery is a class of large military weapons built to fire munitions with more power and range than the usual weapons with soldier.

About

- Dhanush is upgraded version of Swedish 155-mm Bofors howitzers, which India procured in the mid-1980s.
- It is indigenously designed and manufactured 155mm x 45mm calibre artillery gun

Why in news?

- India's new indigenously designed and developed Dhanush 155-millimeter/45-caliber towed howitzer is ready for induction following the completion of final development trials

Specifications

- It is a 155mm, 45 calibre gun with a range of 36km.
- About 80% of components are indigenously sourced.



SHAKTI Scheme

What does Sakthi Scheme entail?

- Scheme to Harness and Allocate Koyla (Coal) Transparently in India (SHAKTI), will give long-term contracts to power companies.
- The policy would provide coal linkages to power plants which lacks fuel supply agreements (FSAs) through coal auctions.

Why the new policy?

- The policy initiative followed e-auctioning of coal mines after the cancellation of allocation of the 204 coal blocks in 2014 by the apex court.
- Thus the government brought out a transparent mechanism to auction coal.
- The new coal linkage policy for power plants will help producers ensure fuel supplies in an organised manner.

Why in news?

- Coal India Ltd. recently announced the commencement of the fourth tranche of auction of coal linkages for non-regulated sectors such as cement, steel/sponge iron, aluminium and others.

Coal India Limited (CIL)

- CIL is an Indian state-controlled coal mining company headquartered in Kolkata, West Bengal
- It is a maharatna company and the largest coal producer company in the world

Major coal producing regions in the world

- China and the United States are also among the largest coal producers.
- India has some of the largest reserves of coal in the world (approx. 267 billion tonnes)

Top coal producing states in India:

- Chhattisgarh
- Orissa
- Jharkhand

Notable coal-mining areas:

- Singareni , Telangana
- Chirimiri Coalfield , Chhattisgarh
- Jharia mines, Jharkhand
- Orissa
- Nagpur & Chandrapur , Maharashtra
- Neyveli lignite mines, Tamil Nadu
- Singrauli Coalfield Madhya Pradesh
- Raniganj , West Bengal

Disinvestment

What is Disinvestment?

- It is the action of an organization or government, of selling their asset(s).
- It is aimed at reducing the financial burden on the government due to inefficient Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and to improve public finances.

What is Strategic Disinvestment?

- In strategic disinvestment, significant proportion of a PSU's share and the management control is given to a private sector company
- This private sector company is, a strategic partner to the government.
- It is different from the ordinary disinvestment in which management of the PSU is retained by the Government.

Why in News?

- The government has shelved its plan to privatise Air India exactly a year after the Union Cabinet gave its nod for the disinvestment process, after it failed to get any buyers for the ridden national carrier.

Background

- NITI Aayog recommended for privatisation of Air India and the cabinet committee gave "in-principle" approval for privatising Air India.



Focus Product Scheme

What is Focus Product Scheme (FPS) scheme?

- FPS launched in 2003 with an objective to work as a catalyst to promote India's

exports on a sustained basis, based upon 'Focus Product' and 'Focus Market' concept.

- As per the Focus Product Scheme policy, exports of notified products to all countries shall be entitled for duty credit scrip equivalent to 2 -5 % of the value of exports for each licensing year.

Why in news?

- The Department of Commerce has commissioned a study on "Enhancing Indian Exports of Pharmaceutical products to China" under FPS.
- India is the largest exporter of generic medicines in the world.

What is generic medicine?

- A generic drug is a pharmaceutical drug that is equivalent to a branded product in dosage, strength, route of administration, quality, performance, and intended use, but does not carry the brand name.
- The generic drug has the same active pharmaceutical ingredient (API) as the original, but may differ in characteristics such as manufacturing process, formulation, excipients, colour, taste, and packaging.

What is Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API)?

- The Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API) is the part of any drug that produces its effects



International Relations

International Decade for Action: Water for Sustainable Development 2018-2028

Water Action Decade

- Launched at the UN General Assembly on the occasion of world water day 22 March 2018.
 - Aims to further improve cooperation, partnership and capacity development in response to the SDGs
 - Recent milestone agreements, such as:
 - Sustainable Development,
 - Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
 - Paris Agreement
- have placed water at their heart.
- To implement these water-related goals and targets, and building on the achievements of the previous "*Water for Life*" Decade 2005-2015, the Water Action Decade 2018-2028 aims to create a solid platform to advance cooperation and partnerships at all levels, and put a greater focus on the integrated management of water resources.



Sustainable Development Goals

- Universal set of goals, targets and indicators announced by UN IN 2015 that UN member states will be expected to use to frame their agendas and political policies over the next 15 years i.e. by 2030.
- SDGs, otherwise known as the Global Goals,
- There are 17 goals and 169 targets.
- The commitment period is between 2015 and 2030.



Sendai Framework

- Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
- 15-year, voluntary, non-binding agreement to mitigate the disaster risks.
- Adopted by UN Member States in 2015 at the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan.

Paris Agreement

- Aim is to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change by keeping a global temperature rise this century well below 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase even further to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

Why in News?

- Union Minister for Water Resources visited Tajikistan to represent India in the Conference on "International Decade for Action: Water for Sustainable Development, 2018-2028".

India-Tajikistan relations

- Relations between India and Tajikistan have traditionally been close and in 2012, the two countries elevated their relationship to 'Strategic Partnership' encompassing cooperation in a wide spectrum of areas.
- Tajikistan supports India in most elections in UN bodies and other international organisations such as India's bid for UNSC permanent membership, SCO Member status for India. India has consistently supported Tajikistan's proposals at UN on water related issues.

- India mainly exports pharmaceuticals, meat and meat products, apparel and clothing accessories and iron and steel.

Tajikistan

- It's a mountainous landlocked sovereign country in Central Asia.
- It is bordered by Afghanistan to the south, Uzbekistan to the west, Kyrgyzstan to the north, and China to the east.
- Has a transition economy that is dependent on aluminium and cotton production.
- The Amu Darya and Panj rivers mark the border with Afghanistan, and the glaciers in Tajikistan's mountains are the major source of runoff for the Aral Sea.
- There are over 900 rivers in Tajikistan longer than 10 kilometres.
- The country has a leading role in pioneering global water related issues.

Tier-4 student visas

What are Tier 4 student visas?

- A Tier 4 visa is issued to study in the UK. The sponsor for Tier 4 purposes is the educational institution where the student will study.
- The visa is issued for a particular course at the institution.

Why in News?

- Announcing a wide overhaul of the U.K. immigration regime, the British government said it would be expanding the list of countries from which students would be able to provide reduced documentation when applying for Tier 4 student visas.
- The list includes China and other countries, including Bahrain, Indonesia, and the Maldives. However, India was not on the list.
- It is a development that highlights recent strains in the bilateral relations between the two countries

Thessaloniki International Fair

What is Thessaloniki International Fair?

- It is an annual commercial exhibition event of great importance in Greece and

South Eastern Europe, taking place at the Thessaloniki International Exhibition Center in Thessaloniki, Greece.

- First held in 1926.
- It has been customary for the country's prime minister to set out his government's policies for each coming year in a speech at the annual Thessaloniki International Trade Fair, and for this reason, the event has political significance as well.

Why in News?

- Indian President Ram Nath Kovind participated in the Thessaloniki International Fair recently and held talks with the top leadership of Greece
- He is the first Indian president to travel to Greece in 11 years

Greece

- A peninsular country, with an archipelago of about 3,000 islands
- Bordered by Albania, Republic of Macedonia, Bulgaria, Turkey, and the Ionian Sea, which separates it from Italy

Assumption Island Project

What is the project about?

- India and Seychelles had signed a 20-year agreement in 2015 to develop the naval facility at Assumption Island.
- It was meant to India's first Naval Base project overseas and had acquired significance after China had acquired its first African naval base in Djibouti (near Horn of Africa) in November 2014.

Why in News?

- The Seychelles President officially cancelled the agreement with India for the development of Assumption Island in the Indian Ocean.
- This is because of public protests by activists who believe that the islands must stay away from the brewing India-China regional conflict

Significance

- India was keen on developing the Assumption Island as a naval base due to its key strategic location in the western periphery of Indian Ocean and to expand its footprint in the region where China has

been trying to enhance its military presence.

- The decision by the Seychelles President to drop the deal in the face of protests over a perceived loss of sovereignty is a blow to the government's "SAGAR" (Security and Growth for All in the Region) programme, announced by Mr. Modi during a visit to Indian Ocean Rim (IOR) countries in March 2015.



Indian Community in Seychelles

- Indian nationals were the earliest inhabitants of the island, mostly from Tamil Nadu and later from Gujarat.

Defence Cooperation

- India and Seychelles have an elaborate architecture of defence and security cooperation that has deepened over the years with the growing piracy menace and other economic offences in the Indian Ocean region.
- A 45-member Indian Army team participated in the 7th India-Seychelles biennial joint military exercise "LAMITYE-7" conducted in Mahé.

Seychelles

- Seychelles is an archipelago and sovereign African state in the Indian Ocean.
- The 115-island country, whose capital is Victoria, lies 1,500 kilometres east of mainland East Africa.
- Assumption Island is a small island situated southwest of Seychelles main and largest island of Mahe.
- It is situated very close to the Mozambique Channel from where much Indian Ocean maritime routes pass.

- Its location lends it strategic importance for monitoring shipping in the Mozambique Channel.

Greece-Macedonia name conflict

What is it about?

- Greece has been in dispute with Macedonia since 1991 over its name.
- It argues that it could imply territorial claims over the Greek province of Macedonia and an appropriation of ancient Greek culture and civilisation.

Why in news?

- The foreign ministers of Greece and Macedonia signed an accord on Sunday to rename Macedonia as the "Republic of North Macedonia".
- Under the deal, Greece will lift its objections to the renamed nation on joining the EU and NATO.
- The agreement still requires the approval of both parliaments and a referendum in Macedonia.



Doctors without Borders

Who are Doctors without Borders?

- An international humanitarian medical non-governmental organisation (NGO) of French origin best known for its projects in conflict zones and in countries affected by endemic diseases
- Its principles & guidelines are listed in its Charter, the Chantilly Principles, and the later La Mancha Agreement.
- Has a general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.
- Received the 1999 Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of its members' continued

efforts to provide medical care in acute crises, as well as raising international awareness of potential humanitarian disasters.



Suriname

Suriname

- Suriname is a sovereign state on the North Eastern Atlantic coast of South America.
- Bordered by Atlantic Ocean to the north, French Guiana to the east, Guyana to the west and Brazil to the south

Why in news?

- Indian president visited Suriname recently.

About the visit:

- First ever visit of an Indian President to Suriname.
- President addressed the National Assembly of Suriname.
- He was the First foreign Head of State to address the National Assembly of Suriname.
- The visits to Suriname and Cuba is being seen as a reflection of India giving more importance to ties with Latin America which is potential areas of expansion of Indian markets.

UNHRC

- The UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) was established in 2006 to replace the UN Commission on Human Rights, which ran from 1947 to 2006.
- The HRC meets three times a year and its functions include the drafting and adoption of new human rights standards.

Membership

- The 47 seats are divided between the 5 official UN regions: Africa (13); Asia (13); Latin America and the Caribbean (8); Western Europe and Other (7); Eastern Europe (6).
- One-third of the council is elected each year by the UN General Assembly, and members serve three-year terms.
- No member may serve more than two consecutive terms.
- A member can also be suspended from the council in a vote of two-thirds of the UN General Assembly.
- Libya was suspended in 2011 after Muammar Gaddafi's crackdown on Arab Spring protesters and armed dissidents. No other member has been suspended.

Why in news?

- The United States is set to withdraw from the UNHRC, calling the organisation a "protector of human rights abusers and a pool of political bias".

USA's argument:

- The US has long called for the body to reform, saying it allows members that have been accused human rights violations.
- US pointed to the involvement of countries like China, Cuba and Venezuela in human rights violation.
- US ambassador also accused the council of maintaining a "disproportionate focus and unending hostility towards Israel" that shows it is "motivated by political bias, not by human rights".



Science & Technology

Bambi Bucket

What is it?

- A collapsible bucket suspended from a helicopter performing fire fighting operations
- Used for lifting and dumping water or fire retardant chemicals
- Developed by Don Arney from Canada

Why in news?

- Indian Air Force used Bambi buckets to douse offshore fire on a ship near Sundarbans

Advantages of Bambi Bucket

- Compact, lightweight and portable
- Designed for maximum durability and strength
- Cost-effective water delivery
- Pilot or crew controlled



Artificial intelligence (AI) & Machine Learning (ML)

What is AI?

- An area of computer science that theorizes about the creation of intelligent machines that work and react like humans which includes functions such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making, and translation between languages

What is ML?

- Machine Learning is an application of artificial intelligence (AI) that provides systems the ability to automatically learn and improve from experience without being explicitly programmed.

- It focuses on the development of computer programs that can access data and use it learn for themselves.

Why in news?

- IIT-BHU & Amazon Internet Services Private Limited (AISPL) signed a MoU on developing a Cloud Research Lab on AI & ML
- Other initiatives in India for the enhancement, innovation and research in India are: HEFA, IMPRINT, Uchhtar Aviskar Yojana

IMPRINT

- Impacting Research Innovation and Technology (IMPRINT) is an initiative under the HRD ministry.
- A first-of-its-kind Pan-IIT and IISc joint initiative to develop:
 - New Education Policy,
 - A road map for Research to solve major engineering and technology challenges in selected domains needed by the country.

Uchhtar Aavishkar Yojana (UAY)

- An initiative under the HRD ministry
- Launched to promote industry-specific need-based research
- Aims to promote innovation in areas relevant to manufacturing and design industry
- This is to keep up the competitiveness of the Indian industry in the global market.

Quadrivalent Influenza Vaccine

What is a vaccine?

- A vaccine is a substance containing a harmless form of the germs that cause a particular disease.
- It is given to people, to prevent them getting that disease. (eg: polio vaccine contains inactivated polio virus)

What is a quadrivalent vaccine?

- A vaccine that stimulates an immune response against four different infections

Quadrivalent Influenza Vaccine

- The quadrivalent flu vaccine is designed to protect against four different flu viruses; two influenza A viruses and two influenza B viruses.

Why in News?

- The World Health Organisation (WHO) changed its recommendation from using a trivalent flu vaccine to a quadrivalent flu vaccine (FluQuadri).
- This vaccine contains 2 Influenza A Virus strains (H1N1 & H3N2) and 2 Influenza B Virus strains (Victoria & Yamagata).

Situation in India

- Since 2011, there have been about 97,000 H1N1 cases and over 7,100 deaths in India
- In the case of H1N1, there are two strains — *California* and *Michigan* — that cause influenza.
- For 2018, the WHO has recommended the *Michigan* strain for India.

Low Ovarian Reserve & Latent TB

What is low ovarian reserve?

- Ovarian reserve is the pool of eggs present in the ovaries at any given time.
- Low ovarian reserve is when there is a physiological decrease in the number of eggs
- This results in an insufficient number to ensure a reasonable chance of pregnancy.

Latent TB

- Tuberculosis (TB) is a disease caused by a germ called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*
- Not everyone infected with TB bacteria becomes sick. As a result, two TB-related conditions exist: Latent TB and Active TB
- Persons with latent TB infection do not feel sick and will not show any symptoms of TB.
- Unlike people suffering from active TB, latent TB patients cannot spread the infection to others.

The new revelation

- Women with low ovarian reserve suffering from Latent TB underwent TB therapy for a period lasting 6 months
- After the therapy, they showed significant improvement in chances of pregnancy.

Gold nanocarrier for cancer

What is a nanocarrier?

- A nanocarrier is nano material used as a transport module for another substance, such as a drug

The new development

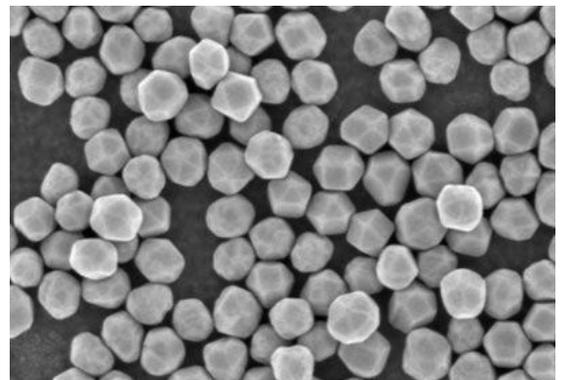
- CSIR & Indian Institute of Chemical Biology, Kolkata have designed a gold nanocarrier coated with Porphyrin, which successfully delivered doxorubicin (an anti-cancer drug) to cancer cells.

Method

- Doxorubicin (drug) was loaded on the Porphyrin-coated gold nano particle.
- Cancerous cells exhibit low pH in their vicinity. This property of cancer cells is taken advantage of for this experiment.
- The nano-complex (nanocarrier + drug) is programmed in such a way that the drug gets released from its surface only when it reaches low pH environment.

Findings

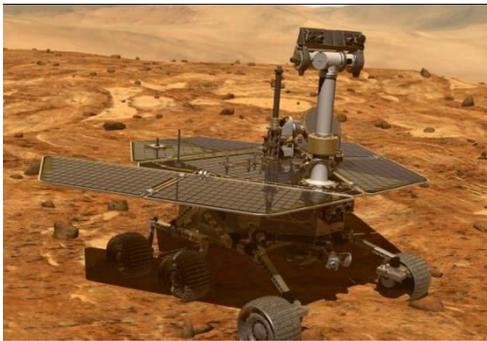
- The porphyrin-gold complex without the drug showed no toxicity to healthy and cancerous cells.
- The nanoparticles coated with the drug showed very low toxicity to normal cells and caused death in cancer cells.



Mars Rovers

Opportunity Mars Rover

- A robotic rover active on Mars since 2004
- A part of NASA's Mars Exploration Rover program
- Objectives: Studying the Martian surface, search for past water activity, geology, minerals, environmental conditions etc.

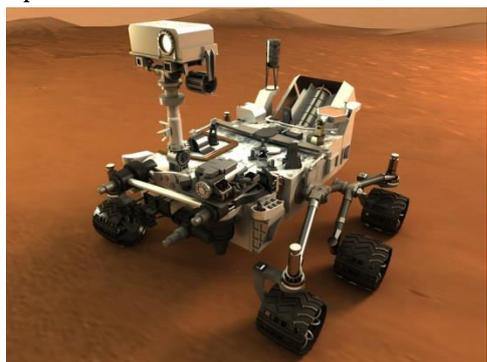


Curiosity Mars Rover

- A car-sized rover designed to explore Gale Crater on Mars, landed at its destination in August 2012
- A part of NASA's Mars Science Laboratory mission
- Objectives: To study Martian geology, climate, role of water and planetary habitability.

Why in News?

- Opportunity Rover has been temporarily shut down due to a dust storm in Mars.
- However, Curiosity Rover continues to perform its functions.



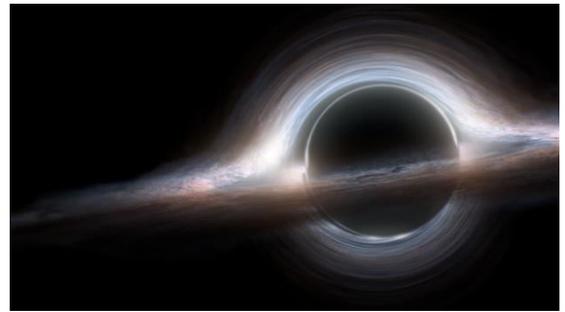
Supermassive Black Hole

What is a supermassive black hole?

- It is the largest type of black hole
- Contain between a million and a billion times more mass than a typical stellar black hole (which is about 100 times the mass of the sun)
- There are only a handful of confirmed supermassive black holes
- They are thought to exist at the centre of most large galaxies, including the centre of our own galaxy, the Milky Way

Why in news?

- Recently a supermassive black hole has been spotted to 'consume' a nearby star.



ICD-11

What is International Classification of Diseases -11 (ICD-11)?

- ICD is the international standard diagnostic tool for epidemiology, health management and clinical purposes.
- WHO has released its new International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11)
- It will be presented at the World Health Assembly in May 2019 for adoption and will come into effect on 1 January 2022.

What is it for?

- It is the foundation for identifying health trends and statistics worldwide, and contains around 55,000 unique codes for injuries, diseases and causes of death.
- The code is used by countries to train health professionals. It is also used by health insurers, national health programme managers and data collection specialists.

Significance of the new classification

- For the first time the report is completely electronic and more user friendly.
- The new ICD reflects progress in medicine and scientific advances.
- It includes new chapter on traditional medicine and sexual health.
- Gaming disorder has been added to addictive disorders
- Also, the report says that being transgender is no longer a 'Mental illness', rather belongs to 'conditions related to sexual health'.
- This re-categorisation will reduce the stigma associated with transgender.

Antibiotic resistance

What is antibiotic resistance?

- The ability of bacteria and other microorganisms to resist the effects of an antibiotic to which they were once sensitive is called antibiotic resistance.
- Resistant microbes are more difficult to treat, requiring alternative medications or higher doses of antimicrobials

What are resistant microbes called?

- Microbes resistant to multiple antimicrobials are called multidrug resistant (MDR).
- Those considered extensively drug resistant (XDR) or totally drug resistant (TDR) are sometimes called "superbugs"

Why in news?

- Triclosan is an anti-bacterial, anti-fungal agent present in a variety of consumer products including toothpaste and soaps.
- A study has found that a common ingredient (Triclosan) found in toothpastes and hand washes could be contributing to the rise of antibiotic resistant bacteria

UNISPACE+50 & COPOUS

What is UNISPACE+50?

- UN Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE) completes its 50th Year since its first meeting in 1968.
- UNISPACE Conferences provided a platform for a global dialogue on key issues related to space exploration and exploitation that have yielded tremendous scientific as well as economic and societal benefits for humankind.
- This year, the third UNISPACE conference is about to take place in Vienna, and is called UNISPACE+50.

United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs

- Tasked with implementing the decisions of the United Nations General Assembly and of the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS)
- HQ: Vienna

Why in news?

- India will train engineering students from other countries to teach them to build and test small satellites.

- This training is named Indo-UN Small Satellites Programme (UNSSP) & COPUOS

Asteroid

What is an asteroid?

- Small rocky bodies orbiting the sun.
- They are also called minor planets.
- An asteroid belt is present in the inner solar system in between Mars and Jupiter.
- While 95% of the asteroids are less than 1 km in diameter, the remaining 5% pose a threat to the earth.

Why in news?

- The U.S. government is stepping up efforts to protect the planet from incoming asteroids that could wipe out entire regions or even continents.

Why plan for such an event?

- Asteroids have fallen on earth since time immemorial
- Such impact events have been the cause of mass extinctions, geological and climatological changes on earth (eg: Chicxulub impact).
- To avoid such catastrophe, the US government is planning to protect the planet from incoming asteroids through improvised asteroid detection, tracking and deflection.

Spanish Flu

What is Spanish flu?

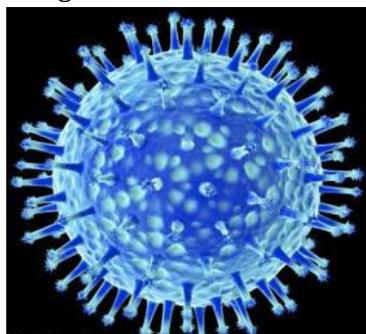
- Also known as the 1918 flu pandemic, caused by Influenza A (H1N1) was an unusually deadly influenza pandemic
- It infected an estimated 500 million people worldwide (about a third of world population) and killed 50 million victims (more than WWI)
- It has been cited as the most devastating epidemic in recorded world history.
- It is called the 'Spanish Flu' because the infection was first reported from Spain in 1918. While it was prevalent in other countries as well, only the Spanish media reported it.

Why in News?

- This year marks the Centenary year of the pandemic and scientists say that we are

still not prepared to face such an outbreak in the now.

- They claim that we do not have any mechanisms or infrastructure to prevent, contain or treat such a pandemic if it arises again.



Google flood warnings

What is it?

- In case of a flood like situation a Google user will be able to see what regions are likely to see water logging first and if their neighbourhood is under threat.

Why in news?

- Union Water Resources Ministry has teamed up with Google to generate flood warnings.

Existing mechanism

- The India Meteorological Department provides inputs to the Central Water Commission (CWC) on whether heavy rainfall is likely and if it could translate into floods.
- The CWC then warns of floods based on the water levels in reservoirs and if these are nearing 'danger marks.'

New mechanism

- CWC and Google will share technical expertise
- Google will provide a visualisation, via Google Maps.

What is Central Water Commission (CWC)?

- CWC is India's apex technical organisation in field of water resources functioning under Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation.

- It is mandated for initiating, coordinating in consultations of state governments, schemes for control, utilization and conservation of water resources throughout the country.

What is National Hydrology Project?

- NHP was launched by Ministry of Water Resources in 2016-17.
- It is World Bank assisted central sector scheme with pan India coverage.
- The NHP will help in gathering Hydro-meteorological data which will be stored and analysed on a real time basis

National data centres

- National Data Centre will have servers which host different government websites and adding more capacity will increase efficiency of e-governance services.

Why in news?

- The Centre will set up the country's biggest data centre in Bhopal with a capacity to host five lakh virtual servers.

About National Data Centres

- Will be set up by the National Informatics Centre (NIC), under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
- This will be the 5th after the ones at Bhubaneswar, Delhi, Hyderabad and Pune.

National Informatics Centre (NIC)

- Established in 1976.
- The premier science and technology organization of the Government in IT & ICT applications.
- Works under Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.



Environment

Grindadrap

What is Grindadrap?

- Grindadrap is the yearly event for the people of the Faroe Islands (an autonomous country within Denmark).
- They hunt long-finned pilot whales as well as other species of cetaceans such as bottlenose dolphins, white-sided dolphins and Risso's dolphins.

Why do they hunt?

- Whaling is deeply embedded in their tradition. The first recorded Grindadráp goes as far back as the 1584
- They used to be essential to their survival, as the meat and blubber of the animals was used for sustenance.

Popular support

- The locals believe that the sport is 'ecological' and 'respectful'.
- Also, whale meat is a part of their tradition, culture and identity.



Are these animals endangered?

- These species aren't on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)'s list of endangered animals

Why in News?

- It has been observed that high levels of mercury and persistent organic pollutants (POPs), released by industries into the environment, end up in the whale meat
- When people consume that meat, it can pose a significant health risk for humans

- Intellectual, neurological development is affected and the immune system gets weakened.

What are Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)?

- They are organic compounds that are resistant to environmental degradation through chemical, biological, and photolytic processes.
- They are of serious concerns because of their potential for long-range transport, persistence in the environment, ability to bio-magnify and bio-accumulate in ecosystems, as well as for their significant negative effects on human health and the environment

Rock lizards

Why in news?

- Indian Scientists from IISc Bangalore found that these signals are a means for the males to advertise their quality to prospective mates and competitors.

Behaviour of Rock Lizards

- They exhibit behaviours such as comical push-ups, head bobs, and drastic color-changes.
- Males perform these signals (all at once), in the vicinity of the females.
- Displaying such flamboyance requires a lot of energy and by doing this, the male is indicating his quality.
- However, such a display also attracts predators, so the males reduce their displays in the presence of a predator.

Research finding

- Males that signalled more had longer breeding tenures



Mount Everest

- Located in Nepal, is Earth's highest mountain peak (above sea level)
- Named after Sir George Everest, the Surveyor General of India (1830-1843)

Why in News?

- Decades of commercial mountaineering have turned Mount Everest into the world's highest rubbish dump
- Fluorescent tents, discarded climbing equipment, empty gas canisters and even human excrement litter the well-trodden route to the summit of the 8,848-metre (29,029-foot) peak.
- Meanwhile, melting glaciers caused by global warming are exposing trash that has accumulated on the mountain in the past 65 years when Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay climbed Mt. Everest for the first time.



Measures taken

- Nepal implemented a "rubbish deposit scheme"
- Under the scheme, each team would make a deposit of \$4,000 that would be refunded if each climber brought down at least 8 kg of waste.

Results

- Though the climbers are bringing wastes back, it is still less than the amount of rubbish dumped every year.
- Some people forfeit the deposit altogether

Way forward

- Nepal is considering building a bio-gas plant to convert climber's wastes into fertilizer.

Sacred grooves

What are sacred grooves?

- They are forest fragments of varying sizes, which are communally protected, and which usually have a significant religious connotation for the protecting community.
- They can vary from a few trees to several hundred.

Tradition

- Traditionally it is called 'Devrai'. Dev means 'God' and Rai means 'Forest'.
- A village was sited around a 'sacred grove' and its deity, providing worship and resource extraction to the residents

Why in news?

- Steadily eroding ties to nature and rising urban migration among the younger generation in these communities have led to a decline in awareness about the importance of preserving these groves.
- There is no legislation to preserve these regions in the country

Benefits of these sacred grooves

- They are crucial 'Germplasm' repositories
- They possess rare plants such as 'Narkya' and economically important plants like 'Wild nutmeg'
- They are the sources of a number of rivers and help in regenerating the water table.

What is a 'germplasm'?

- Germplasm means: the genetic material of the germ cells (eg: Sperm in human males)
- Germplasm contains the information for a species' genetic makeup, a valuable natural resource of plant diversity



Devrai Conservation Project

- A NGO (*Biospheres*) has taken steps to document such 'green islands' to conserve its rich habitat in the Western Ghats.
- They plan to collect data and sensitise policy makers on the importance of preserving such rich heritage.
- They encourage locals to embrace their tradition and also document the regional deities along with the socio-cultural assessment.

Bio-fuel

What is biofuel?

- It is the fuel produced by biological processes (such as anaerobic digestion) (eg: Gobar gas) rather than by geological processes (such as fossil fuel production) (eg: Petrol).

Why in news?

- Cathay Pacific had successfully tested the Sugarcane-based biofuel blend sourced from Brazil in its Airbus 350-900 variant.
- The aircraft tested with 10% blend of biofuel along with traditional jet fuel.
- This is a move by the airline to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions.

Chrysilla volupeswas

- It is a spider belonging to the family of 'Jumping Spiders', last recorded in 1868, in Gujarat by German Arachnologist Dr. Ferdinand Anton France Karsch.

Why in News?

- Scientists have rediscovered the Spider after 150 years in Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary in Western Ghats, Kerala.

What is Arachnology?

- Study of spiders, and related animals like scorpions, harvestmen and other Arachnids

What are Arachnids?

- Joint-legged invertebrate animals, with 8 legs.
- Spiders form the largest order in arachnids



Zero budget natural farming in AP

What is Natural farming?

- It is also called 'do-nothing farming', a term coined by Japanese farmer Masanobu Fukuoka.
- It applies natural methods in farming such as: no tills, no chemical use etc.

What is Zero budget natural farming?

- It is a farming practice that believes in natural growth of crops without adding any fertilizers and pesticides or any other foreign elements.
- The word Zero Budget refers to the zero net cost of production of all crops (inter crops, border crops, multi crops).
- This farming method is implemented at the grass root level.

Advantages of ZBNF

- The inputs used for seed treatments and other inoculations are locally available in the form of cow dung and cow urine.
- Input costs are near zero as no fertilizers and pesticides are used
- Helps in retaining soil fertility
- Cut toxins in food
- Climate change resilient as ZBNF farms were able to withstand drought and flooding

ZBNF in India

- Evolved first in Karnataka.

- However, AP is now the first state to implement a ZBNF policy
- Rythu Sadhikara Samstha is the agency implementing ZBNF in AP
- The Government of India provides funding through the Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana and Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana.

ZBNF yields

- Yields of various cash and food crops have been found to be significantly higher when compared with chemical farming

Need for ZBNF

- Agricultural scientists in India have to rework their entire strategy so that farming is in consonance with nature.
- Resilient food systems are the need of the day given the variability of the monsoons due to global warming and declining groundwater in large parts of India
- ZBNF satisfies both.

Urban forestry

What is Urban Forestry?

- Urban forestry is the art, science and technology of managing trees and forest resources in and around urban community ecosystems
- It is done for the physiological, sociological, economic, and aesthetic benefits trees provide society
- History
- Urban forestry advocates the role of trees as a critical part of the urban infrastructure.

Why in news?

- Government is planning to re-develop 7 government colonies to increase its green-area coverage by three times through Urban Forestry.

Bio vacuum toilets

What is a bio vacuum toilet?

- Bio vacuum toilets flush toilets that use suction for the removal of faeces and urine resulting in a minimal requirement of water.

Why in news?

- Indian Railways is planning to replace the bio toilets with bio vacuum toilets like the ones on airplanes.

Benefits

- Toilets in trains will be odour free
- Cut down water usage by one-twentieth
- Much lesser chances of the toilet getting blocked.

What is bio toilet?

- The human waste is collected from toilet and is acted upon by a colony of anaerobic bacteria that convert human waste mainly into water and bio-gases (mainly Methane CH₄ & Carbon Dioxide CO₂).
- The gases escape into the atmosphere and wastewater is discharged after disinfection onto the track.

Bio toilet vs. bio vacuum toilet

- A bio-toilet uses 10-15 liters of water per flush while a bio-vacuum toilet consumes only around 500 ml
- A bio-toilet costs Rs 2.5 lakh, a bio-vacuum one is for Rs 3.25 lakh.

Kanha Tiger Reserve & Satkosia Tiger Reserve

Kanha Tiger Reserve

- A tiger reserve and the largest national park of Madhya Pradesh
- The first tiger reserve in India to officially introduce a mascot, "Bhoorsingh the Barasingha"
- The novel by Rudyard Kipling, The Jungle Book is based on jungles in this reserve also.



Satkosia Tiger Reserve

- Located in Odisha on the banks of River Mahanadhi

Why in news?

- T-2, a three-year-old tiger from the Kanha Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh and introduced it to Odisha's Satkosia Tiger Reserve, marking the first ever inter-State re-introduction of tigers.

Why reintroduction of tigers?

- The Sariska crisis in 2004 and the Panna crisis in 2008 are historical examples of complete extinction of isolated populations, due to poaching.
- With fragmentation and degradation of habitat, poaching threats, the reintroduction of Tiger attains high significance.

How is it done?

- The animal selected for relocation (T-2), was in its 'transient age' and had not set its territory.
- T-2 was tranquillised and radio collared before introducing it into the new forest area. The radio collar is to detect and keep track of the tiger's movements.
- Initially there will be a 'soft release' in an enclosure with its natural prey.

- Once it gets adapted to the environment, it will be released into the wild.

Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)

What is BEE?

- Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) was set-up in 2002, under the Energy Conservation Act, 2001
- Its purpose is to assist in developing policies and strategies with a thrust on self-regulation and market principles with the primary objective of reducing energy intensity of the Indian economy

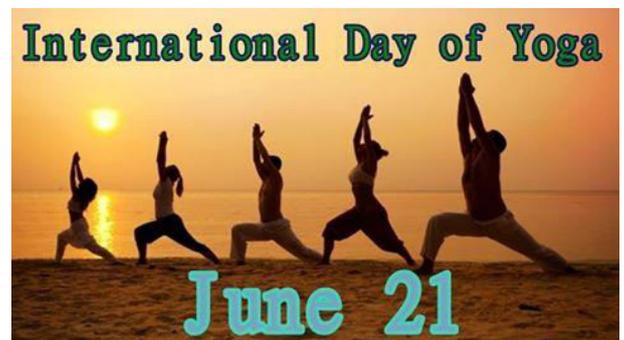
Why in news?

- Power Ministry has launched a campaign to promote energy efficiency in the area of air-conditioning.
- Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) has carried out a study and has recommended that the default setting in the air-conditioning should be at 24 degree Celsius
- This is because, 24 degree Celsius, is closer to the normal human body temperature which is around 36-37 degree Celsius.

Culture

International Day of Yoga

- Aims to raise awareness worldwide of the many benefits of practicing yoga
- Declared by UN General Assembly in December 2014 and was first celebrated in 2015
- Celebrated annually on 21st June as it is the longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere
- The theme for the 2018 celebration, organized by the Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations, is 'Yoga for Peace.'
- Yoga has been named an 'Intangible Cultural Heritage' by UNESCO



Ambubachi Mela

- It is a four day fair to mark the annual menstruation of the goddess at Kamakhya temple atop Nilachal hills in Guwahati, Assam.

- It is believed that Devi Kamakhya, goes through her annual cycle of menstruation during the monsoon season.

Why in News?

- This year's Ambubachi Mela has started.

Religious Significance

- It is one of 51 shaktipeeths or seat of Shakti followers, each representing a body part of Sati, Lord Shiva's companion.
- The temple's sanctum sanctorum houses the yoni — female genital — symbolised by a rock.
- There is no other idol of the presiding deity.
- The only ones that avoid the temple are the descendants of the medieval Koch royalty.
- This is because the goddess is believed to have cursed the royalty after the king and his brother 'Chilarai' — one of Assam's revered generals — had secretly watched her dance.

Cultural Significance

- The ritualistic fair celebrating the goddess' period is one of the reasons why the taboo associated with menstruation is less in Assam compared to other parts of India.
- The government consider the occasion to promote menstrual hygiene

Tuloni Biya

- The ritual celebrated for the attainment of womanhood of girls in Assam.



Adopt a Heritage Scheme

About the scheme

- Implemented by Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture and Archaeological Survey of India.
- Aims to involve public sector companies, private sector companies, corporates citizens/individuals.
- The project plans to entrust heritage sites/monuments and other tourist sites to private sector companies, public sector companies and individuals for the development of tourist amenities.
- They would become 'Monument Mitras' through the innovative concept of "Vision Bidding" and adopt the sites.

What is Vision Bidding?

- The agency with best vision for the heritage site will be given an opportunity to associate pride with their CSR activities.
- They would also get limited visibility in the premises and the Incredible India website.

Why in news?

- 3 MoUs have been signed & 6 are at advanced stage and 31 more monuments are enlisted for coverage under the scheme.

News in-depth

The Hindu-Editorials

NCRB seeks Aadhaar data

NCRB

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

Request for Aadhaar Access:

- National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) has requested the government to provide limited access to Aadhaar database, which would help the investigating agencies in conducting probe into inter-State criminals more effectively and timely with the help of fingerprint.
- 80 to 85% of the criminals every year are first-time offenders with no record with the police.

Status of Finger Print Identification System:

- Current Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) which was

developed in 1992, has only 11.5 lakh fingerprint database, while all the States have about 50 lakh finger print database.

- "The AFIS has limited capacity and is outdated now.

Need of the hour

- To develop a National Automated Fingerprint identification system which should link all Police Stations
- Amendment in Identification of Prisoners Act 1920 to include other biometrics as face, palm and voice.
- Modernise and increase the finger print cadre strength in all the states so that finger print experts could visit at least 10% of the crime scenes which currently stands at 1%.

UIDAI Reply

- UIDAI has asserted that the use of Aadhaar biometric data for criminal investigations cannot be allowed.

Ayushman Bharat - National Health Protection Scheme

Ayushman Bharat

- The scheme will cover over 10 crore poor and vulnerable families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries)
- Provides coverage up to 5 lakh rupees per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization.
- It will subsume the on-going centrally sponsored schemes – Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) and the Senior Citizen Health Insurance Scheme (SCHIS).

Salient features of the Scheme

- An entitlement based scheme with entitlement decided on the basis of deprivation criteria in the SECC database.
- Provides a defined benefit cover of Rs. 5 lakh per family per year.
- Benefits of the scheme are portable across the country and the beneficiary will be allowed to take cashless benefits.
- The beneficiaries can avail benefits in both public and empanelled private facilities.
- To control costs, the payments for treatment will be done on package rate

basis (to be defined by the Government in advance).

- One of the core principles is: co-operative federalism and flexibility to states.
- For giving policy directions and fostering coordination between Centre and States, it is proposed to set up Ayushman Bharat National Health Protection Mission Council (AB-NHPMC) at apex level Chaired by Union Health and Family Welfare Minister.
- States would need to have State Health Agency (SHA) to implement the scheme.
- To ensure timely funding, the transfer of funds from Central Government to State Health Agencies may be done through an escrow account directly.
- In partnership with NITI Aayog, a robust, modular, scalable and interoperable IT platform will be made operational which will entail a paperless, cashless transaction.

Why in news?

- The Indian Medical Association (IMA) has said that the Ayushman Bharat Scheme has conceptual deficits and operational flaws.

Flaws identified by IMA

- The rates quoted by government are impractical and does not cover even 30% of cost of procedure.
- Fails to create any new assets.
- The government will lose around Rs. 400 crore to private health insurance companies which will manage the scheme.

- The scheme will only end up strengthening the insurance business instead of the health sector.

Alternatives suggested by IMA

- Costing undertaken should be transparent and in public domain.
- The same money if invested in our public hospitals it would have brought medical care closer to poor.
- NHPS should be modelled as healthcare purchase directly from the provider hospitals removing the insurance companies and third parties.

What is Indian Medical Association (IMA)?

- IMA is the only representative, national voluntary organisation of Doctors of Modern Scientific System of Medicine, which looks after the interest of doctors as well as the well-being of the community at large.

Objectives of IMA

- To promote and advance medical and allied sciences in all their different branches.
- To promote the improvement of public health and medical education in India.
- To maintain the honour and dignity and to uphold the interest of the medical profession and to promote co-operation amongst the members thereof.
- To work for the abolition of compartmentalism in medical education, medical services and registration in the country and this to achieve equality among all members of the profession.

Water Productivity Mapping

What is Water Productivity Mapping Report?

- The report was released by National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD).
- The report maps a water atlas for ten major crops — rice, wheat, maize, red gram, chickpea, sugarcane, cotton, groundnut, rapeseed-mustard and potato.
- These together occupy more than 60% of the country's gross cropped area.

Why in news?

- NABARD has said that its time to shift focus from land to water productivity.

About the report

- Indian agriculture uses 80% of all the country's water resources. Changing the objective of agriculture development to increasing productivity per unit of water is crucial.

- Stark differences between land & water productivity are seen in rice and sugarcane cultivation.
- Punjab reports the highest land productivity for rice, producing four tonnes per hectare. However, it only produces 0.22 kg of rice for every meter cube of irrigation water. Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh, on the other hand, produce 0.75 and 0.68 kg for the same amount of water. However, low irrigation coverage results in low land productivity in these States. Jharkhand has only 3% of its land under irrigation.
- For sugarcane, another water-guzzling crop, Tamil Nadu reports the highest land productivity, producing 105 tonnes per hectare. Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh also have high rates of land productivity. However, all four States in the water-stressed sub-tropical belt have an irrigation water productivity of less than 5 kg/m³.
- The report recommends that cropping patterns be re-aligned to water availability, using both demand and supply side interventions.
- With water and power subsidies skewing cropping patterns, it also recommends reform in these areas, with a shift from the price policy approach of heavily

subsidising inputs to an income policy approach of directly giving money farmers on per hectare basis.

What is NABARD?

- National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) is an apex development financial institution in India, headquartered at Mumbai established in 1982.

Functions

- The Bank has been entrusted with "matters concerning policy, planning and operations in the field of credit for agriculture and other economic activities in rural areas in India.
- Facilitating credit flow for promotion and development of agriculture, small-scale industries, cottage and village industries, handicrafts and other rural crafts.
- To support all other allied economic activities in rural areas, promote integrated and sustainable rural development and secure prosperity of rural areas.

Cropping pattern

- Cropping pattern refers to proportion of area under different crops at different points of time.
- It also indicates the time and spatial arrangement or sequence of crops and / or fallow in a particular land area.

Cross Border Insolvency & UNCITRAL

- Insolvency Bankruptcy Code, 2016 provides a mechanism for time-bound recovery of dues from insolvent debtors in India and facilitates the ease of doing business in India.

Could IBC prove effective in dealing with debtors who have assets or creditors in more than one country?

- Keeping this in mind, Government (Ministry of Corporate Affairs) has taken initiative for globally accepted and well recognised Cross-Border Insolvency framework within the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (the Code).

What is Cross Border Insolvency?

- Cross border insolvency – sometimes called as international insolvency – regulates the treatment of financially distressed debtors where such debtors have assets or creditors in more than one country.
- Typically CBI is more concerned with the insolvency of companies which operate more than one country rather than the bankruptcy of individuals.
- Inclusion of the cross-border insolvency framework will further enhance 'ease of doing business'

- Furthermore it will make India an attractive investment destination for foreign creditors given the increased predictability and certainty of the insolvency framework.
- On the global scale, the UNCITRAL (United Nations Commission on International Trade Law) Model Law on Cross-Border Insolvency, 1997 (Model Law) has emerged as the most widely accepted legal framework to deal with cross-border insolvency issues while ensuring the least intrusion into the country's domestic insolvency law.

UNCITRAL:

- The core legal body of the United Nations system in the field of international trade law
- A legal body with universal membership specializing in commercial law reform

worldwide for over 50 years, UNCITRAL's business is the modernization and harmonization of rules on international business.

UNCITRAL Model Law on Cross-Border Insolvency (1997)

- The UNCITRAL Model Law on Cross-Border Insolvency was a model law issued by the secretariat of UNCITRAL on 30 May 1997 to assist states in relation to the regulation of corporate insolvency and financial distress involving companies which have assets or creditors in more than one state.
- Due to the growing prevalence of multinational insolvencies, the Model Law has been adopted by 44 States till date, including Singapore, UK and US.

MSME Pulse Report

- SIDBI and Trans Union CIBIL together brings out a quarterly report on MSME Sector called as MSME Pulse for providing the policy makers, regulators and industry with precise data-driven insights to support policy as well as business decisions.
- The First Edition was released in the month of March, 2018.
- The 2nd Edition of MSME Pulse for June 2018 quarter has now been released.

Findings

- It shows that the overall commercial credit exposure (Credit exposure is the total amount of credit made available to a borrower by a lender) (Y-o-Y) has shown the highest growth rate in the last five Quarters.
- The total on-balance sheet commercial lending exposure in India stood at Rs.54.2 lakh crores, as of March 2018 with Micro and SME segment constituting Rs.12.6 lakh crores, which contributes to ~23% of commercial credit outstanding.

- To sum-up, the second edition of MSME Pulse Report by SIDBI-TransUnion CIBIL reveals a broad based recovery in commercial credit growth and also shows that MSME segment continues with strong growth and stable asset quality.
- MSME NPA rates have remained stable and range bound. Recognized NPA exposure for MSME is Rs. 81,000 Crores as on Mar'18
- Private Banks and NBFCs have further increased their market share in Micro and SME lending from 27.5% and 9.1% in March 2017 to 30.3% and 10.9% in March 2018. Share of PSBs has fallen from 57% to 50.4% in the same period.
- It appears that most MSME's including the smallest ones have recovered from the impact of demonetization and GST.

What is SIDBI?

- Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), a premier Financial Institution set up on 2nd April 1990 under an Act of Indian Parliament

- SIDBI acts as the Principal Financial Institution for Promotion, Financing and Development of the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprise (MSME) sector as well as for co-ordination of functions of institutions engaged in similar activities.
- MSME sector has been an important pillar of the Indian Economy, contributing up to 33% in the country's Gross Value Added (GVA) as per FY 2014-15, with 51 million enterprises providing employment to over 117 million Indians.

What is Credit Exposure?

- Credit exposure is the total amount of credit made available to a borrower by a lender. The magnitude of credit exposure indicates the extent to which the lender is exposed to the risk of loss in the event of the borrower's default.

Micro Small and Medium Enterprises

- A micro enterprise is one where investment in plant and machinery does not exceed Rs. 25 lakh

- A small enterprise is one where the investment in plant and machinery is more than Rs. 25 lakh but does not exceed Rs. 5 crore
- A medium enterprise is an enterprise where the investment in plant and machinery is more than Rs.5 crore but does not exceed Rs.10 crore.

Enterprises engaged in providing or rendering of services

- A micro enterprise is an enterprise where the investment in equipment does not exceed Rs. 10 lakh;
- A small enterprise is an enterprise where the investment in equipment is more than Rs.10 lakh but does not exceed Rs. 2 crore;
- A medium enterprise is an enterprise where the investment in equipment is more than Rs. 2 crore but does not exceed Rs. 5 crore.

Policy Framework for Farm Loan Waivers – Suggestions by Orissa CM

- In order to relieve farmers of the agrarian distress, Farm Loan waiver is considered as one of the option in India.
- Whether farm loan waiver is good or bad is a different debate. But it puts a huge fiscal stress on the government which is a fact.
- In this situation Orissa CM has come up with a suggestion for a policy framework with respect to Farm Loan Waiver.
- He suggests the setting up of a Credit Guarantee Trust for Agriculture (CGTA) on the lines of the Credit Guarantee Trust for Small and Medium Enterprises (CGTSME).
- "Through this, collateral-free agricultural loans of up to Rs. 50 lakh and collateral-free crop loans (Crop loan is a short term advance which is given by banks and co-operative societies who deals in financial sector.) of up to Rs. 2 lakh is offered, backed only by the guarantee of CGTA,"
- This would address the problem of access to institutional credit faced by sharecroppers (Sharecropping is a form of agriculture in which a landowner allows a tenant to use the land in return for a share of the crops produced on their portion of land). Since they are not owners of the land they till and since banks are reluctant to offer them credit, sharecroppers have to turn to private moneylenders.
- Odisha government is creating a CGTA for the State's farmers with a corpus of nearly Rs. 200 crore.

CGTSME

- Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME), Government of India launched Credit Guarantee Scheme (CGS) so as to strengthen credit delivery system and facilitate flow of credit to the MSE sector.

- To operationalise the scheme, Government of India and SIDBI set up the Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE).
- CGTMSE has introduced a new "Hybrid Security" product allowing guarantee cover for the portion of credit facility not covered by collateral security.
- In the partial collateral security model, the lending institutions will be allowed to obtain collateral security for a part of the credit facility, whereas the remaining part of the credit facility, up to a maximum of 200 lakh, can be covered under Credit Guarantee Scheme of CGTMSE

Trade War in the 21st Century

How did the world come to the brink of a trade war?

- American President felt the reason for joblessness of Americans is because of the Unfair Global Trade.
- So, first he withdrew the US from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a trade agreement signed by Barack Obama.
- Then he launched an investigation into China's alleged theft of American intellectual property rights. In March, he said the US would impose tariffs on imported steel and aluminium.
- Further action against China has also been announced.

So how big a deal is this?

- Potentially massive. The world is currently closer to a full-scale trade war than at any time since the 1930s.
- Many protectionist measures have been introduced since the global financial crisis of a decade ago but, for the most part, they have been small scale.
- The current tension is far more serious: it involves the world's three biggest economies – the US, China and the EU – and it is too big to ignore.

Developments

- India joined the European Union and other U.S. trading partners in retaliating against the Trump administration's tariff hikes on steel and aluminium.
- India last week submitted a revised list of 30 items on which it proposes to raise customs duties by up to 50% to the World Trade Organization (WTO).

- The move was in retaliation against the US raising duty on certain steel and aluminium products that had a tariff implication of \$241million for India.
- Economists noted that the amount of money involved with India's levies dwarfed in comparison with that of China – U.S.-India trade was \$114 billion in 2016, while U.S.-China trade was \$648.5 billion – but that the gesture had important symbolism and could presage further strain between the two friendly democracies at a time when their diplomats are working to deepen military ties.
- The move could hurt India's economic growth as the country diversifies its exports, as well as prompt India "to re-look at U.S. relations as undependable." That could push India closer to Southeast Asia and the European Union, further isolating the United States.

What next?

- For long, global financial markets largely ignored risks of an all-out trade war among major economies, but things are changing quickly.
- This fresh round of volatility suggests investors may be beginning to take threats of a trade war more seriously.
- The fact is that all sides engaged in a trade war eventually lose.
- The longer it goes on, the greater the cost as growth slows down under the increasing burden of taxes.

- The only gainers in a trade war will be special interest groups, such as the U.S. domestic steel industries.

- Nevertheless, global powers must try their best to bring an end to the ongoing trade war before it gets out of hand.

New auto policy

Why in News?

- The new National Auto Policy, which may seek emission-linked taxation on automobiles and a technology-agnostic green mobility roadmap, is likely to be finalised in the next three months

Highlights

- The New Policy envisages having a single nodal regulatory body for the automobile industry.
- Suggested a comprehensive long-term plan with definite time-lines under the new auto policy.
- The draft of the policy released earlier had recommended rationalisation of the GST structure for automobiles that is currently based on length, engine displacement, engine type and ground clearance.
- The current policy has called for replacing the current classification criteria with a composite criterion based on vehicle length and CO2 emissions.
- There has also been a discussion on strengthening the FAME India (Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric & Hybrid Vehicles) scheme further for the

faster adoption of eco-friendly automobile technologies.

FAME

- The Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles (FAME) India was launched in 2015 under National Electric Mobility Mission (NEMM)
- It aims at promoting eco-friendly vehicles in the country.
- The scheme is being administered by the Heavy Industries Ministry.

Mandate of FAME

- To support hybrid or electric vehicles market development and its manufacturing eco-system in the country in order to achieve self-sustenance in the stipulated period.

Objectives

- Provide fiscal and monetary incentives for adoption and market creation of both hybrid and electric technologies vehicles in the country.
- Incentivise all vehicle segments, including two-wheelers, three wheeler auto, passenger four-wheeler vehicle, light commercial vehicles and buses.

UN report on State of Food Security and Nutrition in the world

What is food security?

- Food security is a situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.

What is nutrition?

- Nutrition is the intake of food, considered in relation to the body's dietary needs.
- Good nutrition – an adequate, well balanced diet combined with regular

physical activity – is a cornerstone of good health.

State of Food Security & Nutrition (2017)

- The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World is an annual flagship report jointly prepared by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

- With the objective to inform on progress towards ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition and to provide in-depth analysis on key challenges for achieving this goal in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Un Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016-2025.

Highlights of the report

Undernourishment

- Undernourishment is having insufficient food or other substances for good health and condition.
- In 2016 the number of chronically undernourished people in the world is estimated to have increased to 815 million, up from 777 million in 2015 although still down from about 900 million in 2000.

Child stunting

- Stunting is the impaired growth and development that children experience from poor nutrition, repeated infection, and inadequate psychosocial stimulation.
- Globally, the prevalence of stunting fell from 29.5 percent to 22.9 percent between 2005 and 2016, although 155 million children under five years of age across the world still suffer from stunted growth.

Child wasting

- Wasting or thinness indicates in most cases a recent and severe process of weight loss, which is often associated with acute starvation and/or severe disease.
- Wasting affected one in twelve of all children under five years of age in 2016, more than half of whom live in Southern Asia.

Obesity

- Multiple forms of malnutrition coexist, with countries experiencing simultaneously high rates of child under nutrition, anemia among women, and adult obesity.
- Obesity is a medical condition in which excess body fat has accumulated to the extent that it may have an adverse effect on health. It is defined by body mass index (BMI) and further evaluated in terms of fat

distribution via the waist-hip ratio and total cardiovascular risk factors.

- Childhood overweight and obesity are increasing in most regions and in all regions for adults. In 2016, 41 million children under five years of age were overweight.

Conflicts and climate change

- Exacerbated by climate-related shocks, conflicts seriously affect food security and are a cause of much of the recent increase in food insecurity.
- The food security situation has worsened in particular in parts of sub-Saharan Africa, South-Eastern Asia and Western Asia.
- Famines, hunger and under-nutrition are significantly worse where conflicts are prolonged and institutional capacities weak.
- Addressing food insecurity and malnutrition in conflict-affected situations cannot be “business as usual”.
- It requires a conflict-sensitive approach that aligns actions for immediate humanitarian assistance, long-term development and sustaining peace.

Indian scenario

The Data

- Data from the report showed that India is home to 190.7 million of them—a 14.5% prevalence of hunger vis-a-vis its total population.
- While the number of children in India who are stunted fell from 62 million in 2005 to 47.5 million in 2016, the number of adults who are overweight rose from 14.6 million in 2015 to 29.8 million in 2014.
- 14.5% of the population suffers from undernourishment, going by the UN’s assessment for 2014-16.
- The data further showed that 38.4% of children under five in India are stunted, while 51.4% of women in reproductive ages are anemic. At the national level, 53% of women are anemic, Health Ministry data show.
- Anemia is a condition that develops when your blood lacks enough healthy red blood

cells or hemoglobin. Hemoglobin is a main part of red blood cells and binds oxygen. If you have too few or abnormal red blood cells, or your hemoglobin is abnormal or low, the cells in your body will not get enough oxygen.

What India has done?

National Food Security Act

- India's efforts at improving access to food and good nutrition are led by the National Food Security Act with the objective to provide for food and nutritional security in human life cycle approach, by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity.
- The Act provides for coverage of upto 75% of the rural population and upto 50% of the urban population for receiving subsidized foodgrains under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), thus covering about two-thirds of the population.
- The eligible persons are entitled to receive 5 Kgs of foodgrains per person per month at subsidised prices of Rs. 3/2/1 per Kg for rice/wheat/coarse grains.
- The existing Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) households, which constitute the poorest of the poor, will continue to receive 35 Kgs of foodgrains per household per month.
- The Act also has a special focus on the nutritional support to women and children.
- Besides meal to pregnant women and lactating mothers during pregnancy and six months after the child birth, such

women are also being entitled to receive maternity benefit of not less than Rs. 6,000.

- Children upto 14 years of age are entitled to nutritious meals as per the prescribed nutritional standards.

Problems

- The Centre recently said it had received only 3,888 complaints on the public distribution system (PDS) over a five-year period. All this shows that the Centre and State governments are woefully short on the commitment to end undernourishment.
- Institutions such as the State Food Commissions have not made a big difference either. The National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA) provides that every State Government shall, by notification, constitute a State Food Commission for the purpose of monitoring and review of implementation of the Act.
- Distributing nutritious food as a public health measure is still not a political imperative, while ill-conceived policies are making it difficult for many to do this.
- The report on nutritional deficiency should serve as an opportunity to evaluate the role played by the PDS in bringing about dietary diversity for those relying on subsidised food.
- In a report issued two years ago on the role played by rations in shaping household and nutritional security, the NITI Aayog found that families below the poverty line consumed more cereals and less milk compared to the affluent.

World environment day

- India hosted the World Environment day 2018 with the theme "beating plastic pollution".
- India committed to eliminate all single-use plastic in the country by 2022. Around 43% of manufactured plastics are used for packaging, most of it "single-use" plastic.
- It also committed to join UN Environment's 'Clean Seas' campaign, which seeks to turn the tide on marine litter.
- India made a pledge to make 100 national monuments litter-free.

What are plastics?

- Plastic has become an indispensable material in modern society.
- Plastics are organic polymers of high molecular mass and often contain other substances. They are usually synthetic, mainly derived from petrochemicals.
- Due to their low cost, ease of manufacture, versatility, non-corrosiveness and imperviousness to water, plastics are used for multiple purposes at different scales.

The numbers

- Worldwide, one million plastic bags and one million plastic bottles are used every minute. About 50% of our plastic use is single use (disposable) and it constitutes 10% of the total waste generated.
- Nearly 7 billion tons of plastic waste generated, only 9% was recycled, 12% incinerated, and 79% accumulated in landfills or the environment.
- Each year, 13 million tonnes of plastic end up in the Ocean the bulk of India's plastic waste estimated officially at 26,000 tonnes a day is being dumped in the oceans.
- 20 Rivers (mostly from Asia) carry two-thirds of plastic waste to the ocean; the Ganga's contribution to this is one of the highest.
- Economic impact of plastic pollution on marine ecosystems through fisheries and tourism losses and beach cleaning-up costs is estimated to be around \$13 billion per year.
- Drinking water samples analyzed from 14 countries, including India, revealed that 83% have micro-plastics concentration.
- India generates an estimated 32 million metric tonnes of packaging waste each year, of which plastic waste constitutes 16%. But only 60% of the collected plastic waste is recycled.



Existing problems – CPCB findings

- Most of the rules are strong only on paper.
- Most qualify the ban geographically or focus on specific categories which do not address the magnitude of the issue.
- Law requires that all plastic waste recyclers register themselves but there were around 312 unregistered plastic manufacturing/recycling units in Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Jammu & Kashmir, Jharkhand, Manipur, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Uttarakhand and UP.
- There is no proper monitoring system for use of carry bags as per the specified guidelines.
- If complete ban on use and sale of plastic carry bags are imposed, the plastic bags are stocked, sold and used indiscriminately
- Substandard carry bags (<50 micron) are used widely.



Plastic ban – Maharashtra

- There is a state-wide ban on the use of plastic items.
- For the first time offenders, the fine will be Rs5,000, second time offenders, the fine will be Rs10,000 and for third time a fine of Rs25,000, along with imprisonment of three months.
- A ban on manufacturing, use, sale, distribution and storage of plastic materials such as one-time-use bags, spoons, plates, PET and PETE bottles and thermocol items. All kinds of plastic bags, irrespective of their thickness, tea cups, glasses, thermocol glasses, thermocol used for decoration, plastic used in hotels to parcel food like boxes, spoons.
- The ban is not applicable to PET bottles, irrespective of capacity. These bottles, however, should have predefined buyback

price ranging from Rs. 1 to Rs. 2, depending on the size, printed on them.

- Hospitals like saline bottles, and boxes used to store medicines, plastic pens, milk pouches that are above 50 microns in thickness have been exempted from the ban. Packaging television sets, fridges, computers as well as raincoats, plastic used for storing food grains and that used in nurseries for plants and also plastic in which biscuits, chips, are packaged, etc has been exempted from the ban.

Other states with plastic ban

- There is a complete ban on plastics in Chhattisgarh, Jammu and Kashmir, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Punjab, Uttarakhand and Chandigarh.
- Partial ban exists in Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Meghalaya and West Bengal.

What needs to be done?

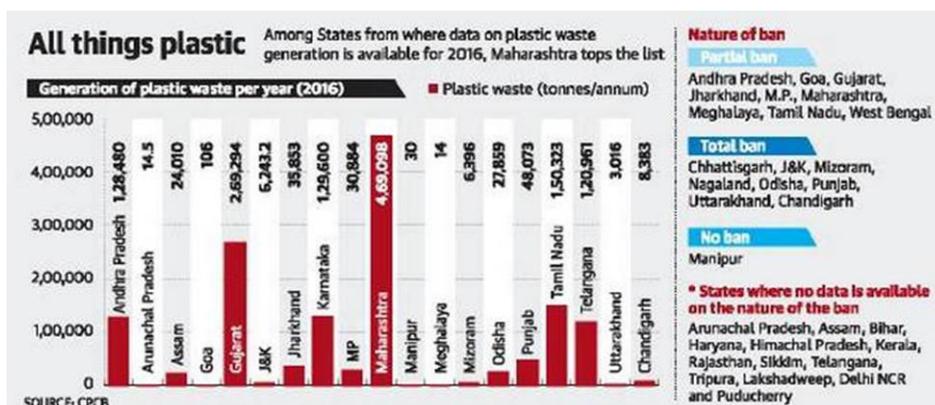
- We should not allow plastic to reach the soil or water.
- The production of plastic should be restricted and encourage recycling through appropriate policies.
- The 'Plastic Waste Management Rules 2016' needs to be strictly followed.
- There should be a behavioral change brought about among the people.
- We should act as responsible citizens with a determination towards maintaining cleaner surroundings.
- Shopkeepers should go in for the use of biodegradable packing materials while shoppers should use cloth bags.
- Segregation at source has not taken off as there is little awareness, official support and

infrastructure. Even bulk generators such as shopping malls, offices and hotels do not abide by the law.

- The Urban Development Secretary in each state should be mandated to bring out a monthly report on how much plastic is collected, chemicals involved and their disposal. Compulsory disclosure norms would maintain public pressure on officials.
- Mass public awareness on the dangers of plastic hazards is a prerequisite
- Eco-friendly substitutes (cloth/paper/jute bags, leaves/areca leaf plates, paper straws) should be developed.
- There is a need for scientific and financial support.
- The idea of charging for plastic bag use and deposit-refund for plastic bottles may be effective options.
- The recent decision by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on extending the mandate on packing food grains and sugar products in jute bags is welcome.
- The Swachh Bharat Mission should emerge as a platform for plastic waste management.

Some good initiatives

- The state of Andhra Pradesh launched a scale-out plan to transition 6 million farms from conventional synthetic chemical agriculture to Zero-Budget Natural Farming.
- Kerala and Sikkim most creditable plastic waste management policies----Sikkim has a system of buying back plastic from consumers
- Maharashtra introduced an urban e-mobility program to scale back emissions



Yojana (June Issue): Part - I

Rationalising the Tax Structure

- Any economy needs massive investments. Investors will be attracted only if there is a fair, transparent and non-discriminatory taxation system.
- This has been realized world over and most developed nations like the United States and Australia took a progressive taxation system.
- India too made reforms by expanding tax base and rationalizing the tax structure.
- Over the years the thrust and direction of reforms have been to improve revenue collection while minimizing distortions..
- Though we have done tax reform there is still a lot to be done to make tax system board based, productive and efficient.
- There are high efficiency costs in corporate tax, excise, customs and sales tax and revenue concentration on petrol and diesel.
- The personal tax continues to be narrow based.
- Reforms in sales tax just began and a destination based VAT was evolved.
- But all this was in the 90's when the government had undertaken major economic reforms to bring in investments.
- State sales tax caused heavy burdens with taxes adding on to final price resulting in tax on tax.
- Tax reforms led to improvement in efficiency and equity.
- The government lost revenue due to reduction in tax rates and insufficient increase in taxpayer base.

Taxation policy reforms

- Indian government brought changes in structure in 1991 indicating that it was following international trends, government brought down rates in income, excise and trade taxes.
- States also introduced VAT in 2005 which is the most important sub-national tax reform since independence.
- India's tax structure before 1991 was inefficient and inequitable with high income tax rates and with no VAT.
- The consumption tax base was narrow and services excluded from tax base and custom duties were very high.
- Export duties reduced international competitiveness of traditional goods.

Sweeping changes in tax structure

Income tax

- By mid-1990's many developing countries had emerged from reform process with lower and fewer rates and India too brought down its rates.
- The reduction of tax rates reflect the twin objectives of administrative feasibility and better tax compliance but was motivated by forces of globalization and increased international movement of capital.

Central excise and customs

- In 1986-87, VAT type credit mechanism was introduced for selected raw materials.
- Then a modified VAT or MODVAT was introduced.
- In 2001, it was renamed the central VAT.

Tax administration

- For a tax policy reform to succeed three elements are necessary, expanding the taxpayer base, computerization and implementation of state level VAT.
- In the mid-1990s, only about 20% of potential taxpayers were within the taxpayer net.
- One of the biggest achievements of central tax administration was the impressive expansion of taxpayer net.
- In the second half of the 1990s, a voluntary disclosure programme required people possessing ownership of property and telephones and trips undertaken abroad to register.
- With time more characteristics were added to add more people.

- By 2000 the number of taxpayers had doubled within a short period.
- In 1985 a Long Term Fiscal Policy was announced by government which recognized the fiscal position of country was going down and there is a need to make changes in taxation system.
- A technical group was reformed to review central excise duties and this led to introduction of MODVAT in 1986 to rationalize the custom duties and the harmonized system of classification of goods.
- Then the government appointed two committees under Raja Chelliah and Vijay Kelkar to overhaul taxation system and bring it on par with international taxation system.

Recommendations of Raja Chelliah Committee

- Reform the personal taxation system by reducing the marginal tax rates.
- Reduction in corporate tax rate.
- Reduce the cost of imported inputs.
- Lower custom duties.
- Reduce the number of custom tariff rates and its rationalization.
- Simplify the excise duties and its integration with Value Added Tax (VAT) system.
- Bring services sector into tax net with VAT
- Broaden the tax base.
- Build tax information and computerization system.
- Improve the quality of tax administration system.

Recommendation of Vijay Kelkar Committee

Administration of Direct Tax

- Tax payer services should be extended both in quality and quantity.
- Tax payers should get easy access through internet and email.
- Permanent Account Number (PAN) should be expanded to all citizens.
- Block assessment of search and seizure cases should be abolished.

- Data entry work and dispatch of refunds should be outsourced.
- Government should establish a Tax Information Network to modernize, simplify and rationalize tax collection.
- Abolish the requirement of Tax Clearance Certificate on leaving the country.
- Empower the CBDT with appropriate administrative and financial powers.

Personal Income Tax

- Increase in exemption to Rs.1 lakh and further exemption for widows and senior citizens.
- Rationalize income tax slabs and eliminate surcharge.
- Incentivize home loans by providing interest subsidy @2%.
- Increase deduction for contribution to pension funds.

Corporation tax

- Reduce corporate tax to 30% for domestic companies and 35% for foreign companies.
- Exemption of listed companies from tax on dividends and capital gains.
- Rate of depreciation for plant and machinery should be increased.
- Abolish Minimum Alternate Tax.

Wealth tax

- Abolish wealth tax.

Key Direct Tax Reforms

Tax Information Network (TIN)

- It was established by National Securities Depository Limited (NSDL).
- Source of countrywide tax related data.
- To modernize collection, processing, monitoring and accounting of direct tax using information technology.

Electronic Return Acceptance and Consolidation System (ERACS)

- System for interface with taxpayers
- Internet supported system for uploading of electronic returns

Online Tax Accounting System

- Upload the details of tax deposited in numerous branches to the central system.

e-TDS& e-TCS

- TDS and TCS returns can be filed electronically.

Other initiatives in direct taxation

- eSahyog: Paperless Assessments
- Sevottam: Efficient Grievance Redressal
- Faster Refunds
- Pre-filled ITR forms
- PAN Camps to increase coverage.

Indirect Tax Reforms

- Reduction in custom duties.
- Central excise duties were first replaced with modified value added tax (MODVAT) and now central value added tax (CENVAT).
- Service tax was first introduced in 1994-95 at 7% and now it is 14%.
- Goods and Service Tax was introduced from July 2017.

Conclusion

- The income rate of 10, 20 and 30 per cent brought in 1996-97 fundamentally altered

the tax structure and brought improved revenue intake.

- Introduction of VAT at state level showed centre-state fiscal cooperation. It also increased revenue intake providing impetus to business.
- Most taxation experts are of the view that Direct Taxes Code (DTC) and Goods and Service Tax (GST) are the biggest reform.
- It will make taxation simpler, increase tax payer base and increase tax buoyancy which will have a long term effect on reducing the fiscal deficit.
- Simpler tax laws and easy arbitration would make India an attractive investment destination.
- The ultimate benefit is higher GDP growth and higher disposable income.

Making Quality Medicines Available to the Common Man

- In India, 6 out of 10 people do not have access to branded medicines. However out of every 6 medicines consumed in the world 1 is Indian. India is one of the leading countries to export world class generic medicines to around 200 countries.

Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana

- Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP) is a scheme dedicated to provide quality medicines at an affordable price to every citizen of the country irrespective of caste, creed and economy.

Nodal ministry

- In 2008, Jan Aushadhi Scheme was launched by department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.

Implementation agency

- Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI).
- Till 2015 only 99 PMBJP Kendras were functional.

- The scheme was revamped as Pradhan Mantri Janaushadhi Yojana.
- To give more impetus in 2016 the scheme was renamed as Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana followed by a media campaign.

Salient features

- Ensure access to quality medicines for all people.
- Extend coverage of quality generic medicines thereby redefining unit cost of treatment per person.
- Quality procurement through WHO-GMP and CPSU manufacturers and released only after clearance from NABL labs.
- Create awareness about generic medicines through education and publicity.
- Create demand for generic medicines by improving access to better health care through low treatment cost and easy availability.
- Generate employment by engaging individual entrepreneurs.

Benefits to entrepreneurs

- Financial support of Rs.2.5 lakhs shall be extended in all cases and only SC/ST and differently abled persons will be provided with free medicines worth Rs. 50,000 in the beginning.
- The basket of medicines from 700+ will be increased to 1000.
- Central warehouse is adequately stocked with products.
- Appointed 8 C&F agents for better supply chain management.
- Appointed 54 distributors over different states for better availability.
- Implemented end to end supply system for better supplies.
- Many state government entered MoU for implementing PMBJP.

Accessibility

- Number of PMBJP kendras functioning has reached more than 3500.
- Per day average sale per Kendra is Rs.3300.
- PMBJP Kendra is now present in 33 states/UT
- Out of 718 districts 584 have been covered.

Conclusion

- PMBJP has drastically brought down prices of quality medicines and even poor can access it.
- Medicines are priced 50-90 per cent less than branded medicines.

Reflecting the true spirit of Jan Andolan

Context of sanitation

- Safe sanitation and clean water are at the core of integrated human development.
- Sanitation campaigns have been rolled out over the past few decades which aimed at achieving Open Defecation free (ODF) status, Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) etc.
- Swachh Bharat Mission is the largest behavioural change campaign in the world. It aims to achieve "Swachh Bharat" by October 2nd, 2019 which marks the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.

Swachh Bharat Mission

- Aims to bring about a general improvement in the quality of life in the rural areas accelerate sanitation coverage and motivate communities to adopt sustainable sanitation practices.
- The two primary components of SBM are:
 1. Making India Open Defecation Free by 2019
 2. Solid and Liquid Waste Management

Making India Open Defecation Free by 2019

- Villages are declared ODF when all members come together and make a resolution to that effect.

- Members of the Village then form a "Nigrani Samiti" to ensure that no one breaks the new norm of using a toilet.
- ODF status is then verified in block, district and state levels.

Milestones

- Since 2nd October 2011 over 7.1 crores, household toilets have been constructed.
- The rural sanitation coverage in India has more than doubled from 39% in 2014 to over 83% today.
- So far 13 states and 4 UT's have attained ODF status
- The National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey (NARSS), conducted under World Bank support has reconfirmed the ODF status of 95.6% of ODF verified villages.

Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM)

- SLWM is one of the key components of Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) (G), launched with the objective of bringing improvement in cleanliness, hygiene and the general quality of life in rural areas.
- Rural India is one of the major contributors of solid and liquid wastes.
- There is an urgent need to address rural solid and liquid resource management (SLRM).

- To implement SLWM efficiently and economically, ownership at grass root level is critical.

Village Swachhta Index

- A comprehensive self-assessment tool developed to measure cleanliness.
- VSI arrives at a Swachhta score based on a percentage of Households with access to safe toilets and usage, littering around the household, stagnant and waste water around the household etc.

Salient Features of SBM

- Led by the continuous support from the highest level, right from the PM
- Built on initiatives which bring the stakeholders and implementers together and provide for continuous communication and close engagement
- The Ministry has in place a robust online platform for the SBM-G. Household level data with respect to sanitation facilities are made available on the Management Information System (MIS) by state govt.
- To further improve transparency & accountability, The Ministry takes stock of rural sanitation through large national sample-based surveys conducted by third-party agencies such as Quality Council of India (QCI) and the National Annual Rural Sanitation Survey (NARSS) was conducted under World Bank support.

Positive Outcomes

- SBM has demonstrated significant health and economic impacts at the grassroots.
- According to a UNICEF report -A household in an ODF Village in rural India saves Rs. 50,000 every year.
- Another study has shown significant improvements in diarrhoea prevalence and stunting among children in ODF villages compared to Non-ODF villages.

Behavioural Change

- The PM has remarked that - Cleanliness cannot be achieved through budget allocation. Behavioural change is the solution and it should become a mass movement (Jan Andolan)
- Two of the strategies that are used are termed as 'Pre-Triggering' and 'Triggering'
- Pre-Triggering involves collecting information about the village, establishing contact and preparing officials for Triggering.
- Triggering is the initiative led by Swachchagrahis (a community level army of volunteers and motivators), who implement the Community Approach to Sanitation (CAS) at the village level.

Conclusion

- The SBM looks to set an example for the world to move towards improving sanitation for all and also achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) in mission mode.

New-Age Skills – Generating Opportunities for Youth

- With the technological advances in digitization, data analytics are reshaping human development, supercharging business performance, creating new wave of job opportunities and entrepreneurship for youth.
- The nation's average age is 29 and the skilling of youths at scale with speed and standards is the key for realizing the full potential of our young work force.
- There is a higher median age of 29-31 years in southern states and lower median age of 20-22 in states like Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar, thus requiring different approaches.
- As per OECD Economic Survey: India 2017, over 30% of youth in the age group of 15-29 are not in employment, education or training (NEET).
- The government has taken various measures to improve skills and jobs
 - National Policy for Skill Development address inclusivity by leveraging technology

- Reducing administrative requirements for complying with labour laws
- National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS)
- Statutory minimum wages
- contract employment
- Financial incentives to entrepreneurs

Reaping Fruits of Demographic Dividend

- It is projected that India will have a skilled labour surplus by 2030 because of the vast supply of working age people and government schemes and programmes to boost education and skill development.
- Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) with industry relevant skills are to be set up in every block of the country by 2018.
- Schemes like Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras, Recognition of Prior Learning and National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme can be realized to full potential while working in partnership.
- Power and Skill Development ministries have joined hands to launch a skill development programme to speed up implementation of Saubhagya Yojana.
 - The centre, states rural electrification corporation and National Skill Development Corporation have joined hands to give fillip to rural electrification.

Some of the notable schemes for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship are

- **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)**
 - To train youth to prepare for global markets through industry relevant training
- **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana- National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM)**
 - Sustainable livelihood through skilling and up skilling of urban poor for salaried employment or self-employment opportunities.

- **Director General Of Training-Modular Employable Skills (DGT-MES)**

- Scheme for school dropouts and unorganized sector workers
- Improving gainful employment through vocational training and apprenticeship programmes

- **Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)**

- Placement linked skill development programme for rural youth

- **National Skill Development Corporation**

- PPP model under ministry of skill development and entrepreneurship
- Promote skill development by creation of large number of large number and quality oriented training institutes
- Catalyst in skilling by providing funding to organizations that provide skill training

- **Sector Skill Councils**

- Create occupational standards, develop competency framework, conduct skill gap studies and access and certify trainees.

- **National Skill Development Agency (NSDA)**

- Autonomous body under Ministry of Skill Development
- Coordinates skill development efforts of government and private sectors for achieving skilling targets by 2022.

- **Aajeevika -National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)**

- By Ministry of Rural Development
- To provide opportunities to youth from rural areas to upgrade their skills and provide placement support

- **Atal Innovation Mission**

- Promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship by providing a platform for idea

generation and incubator and mentor support

▪ **Startup India**

- To boost Indian startup ecosystem
- Simplification and handholding of startups, funding support and incentives, industry-academia partnership and incubation support.

New Age Skilling in the Realm of Industry 4.0

What is Industry 4.0?

- Industry 4.0 is characterized by increasing digitization, connected machines, amalgamation of emerging technologies, business analytics and cyber-physical systems.
- Smart factory is the concept where machines talk to each other through sensors which lead to increase in productivity and resource optimization.

Outcomes

- Global trend towards knowledge based economy will grow in coming times
- The focus will be on acquiring new skills on critical thinking, design thinking, problem solving, team work and cognitive learning.
- Re-skilling and up-skilling needs to be done for existing workforce to equip them with changed job roles.
- In India, skills in domains like Internet of Things, Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality, Augmented Reality, Robotics, Big Data Analytics and 3D printing will be in much demand.
- New employment opportunities also known as gig economy will emerge like online developers, coders, online sales, systems thinking and multilingual and multimodal capabilities.
- Low skill jobs will be eliminated and new higher skill jobs and industry sectors will be added.
- There are doubts that the new technologies will kill jobs but historically it can be seen that new technology has created more jobs.

Trends in India

- Industry 4.0 can be integrated with Make in India, Skill India, Startup India and Digital India to create more opportunities.
- Make in India scheme aims to make India a global manufacturing hub and create 100 million new jobs by 2022.
- Import duties on mobile phones, automobiles have been increased so that foreign companies will setup manufacturing units in India.
- Rising trends in enrolments of online courses like big data, machine learning and cloud computing.
- Digital India budget has been doubled.
- Plans to setup centres of excellence for research, training and skilling in robotics, artificial intelligence, digital manufacturing, big data analysis and IOT.
- Startup India launched in 2016 is generating large scale employment and is building a vibrant ecosystem for nurturing entrepreneurship and innovation.
 - Eligible startups are exempt from income tax levy on share premium received
 - 100% deduction of profit and gains from income for 3 out of 7 consecutive assessment years.
- The government has come out with a new draft for telecom policy-National Digital Communications Policy 2018
 - Aim to create a roadmap for emerging technologies.
 - Attract \$100 billion investment and create 4 million jobs by 2022.
 - Increasing India's contribution to global value chain by creation of innovation led startups in digital communications sector.
 - Training 1 million for building new age skills,
 - expand IoTecosystem to 5 billion connected devices
 - Accelerate shift to Industry 4.0.
- National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme has been launched to promote apprenticeship which is a critical asset.

Nurturing Innovation Climate

- Strategic partnership between Academia-Industry-Government can boost innovations and R&D.
- Providing education and employable skills to youth
- Industry can play a significant role through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).
- Youth in rural and semi-urban areas:
 - Have extraordinary potential and entrepreneurial skills
 - Their innovative thinking needs to be nurtured
 - Right exposure to seed funding, mentoring, network support and technology
- Favorable climate
 - Impact of GST and demonetization has faded away.
 - FDI flows are healthy and there is revival of all round business activity.
 - India is the 6th largest manufacturing nation.
 - Improved ranks in global competitiveness index and global innovation index
 - There is optimism for prospect of skills and job creation

- The potential of youth can be translate to real outcomes by
 - Apt policies
 - choice of right skills
 - development of human capital
 - academia-industry linkage

The Road Ahead

- As per World Bank, India is the fastest growing major economy of the world and it will continue so for the next decade.
- The skills agenda needs to be revisited as global manufacturing will see structural shift,
- Cross functional skills will be critical factor of production and driver of competitiveness
- Continuous employee re-skilling and up-skilling
- Government has to inculcate STEM education (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) in the course curricula.

Conclusion

- Youth is the fountain head of national growth and development.
- For this we need progressive transformation which can be achieved with the transformational change the government is trying to bring through various models and schemes.

RSTV Corner

Merger of Banks

- Banking sector faces huge losses due to bad loans massive rise of NPA, so merging weaker bank with stronger bank will reduce the pressure.
- In April 2017, SBI and associates were merged.
- Government is now considering the merger of 4 PSB's- BOB, IDBI, Oriental and Central Bank.
- Also 51% stake sale in IDBI is considered.
- Merger will enable selling assets, shutdown money losing branches.
- Government will have to bear the burden if loss occurs.
- Setting up bad bank to buy NPA and distressed loans and sells or restructures them.
- ARC- Asset reconstruction company, PCA - Prompt corrective Action of RBI are other initiatives.
- Under PCA, threshold limits on no. of loans is set. Failure to compliance will lead to merger or shutting down of banks.
- PSBs are fast losing relevance. Merger will overcome the trust deficiency.
- The objective of merger is to create a stronger bank. They then become self reliant, and dependency on the government reduces.
- Merger will also complement each other in specialisation.

Will the merger really help?

- Positives: Weaker banks will benefit in terms of loss and to survive competition; Narasimhan committee report on 3-4 large PSB would be enough;
- Negatives: Merger is never a one stop solution, what we need is change in governance system of banks and the Twin balance sheet problem of corporate and banks need to be rectified for NPA problem to be solved.

NSG in Jammu and Kashmir

- According to Ministry of Home Affairs report -2013-2017, there have been 1064 violent incidents in J&K
- This is a 64% increase in the number of terror attacks.
- A significant number of security personnel were killed due to these attacks and to avoid more casualties, the NSG (National Security Guard) has been deployed in the state of J&K.

Who are the NSG?

- NSG is an elite Security force popularly called as "black cats", trained to fight against terrorism and casualties.
- They come under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- They will be working alongside the CRPF and J&K Police force during such critical times.

Recruitment & Special Tactics

- The best of military & paramilitary personnel are recruited into NSG.
- There are no direct recruitments to the force.
- They perform anti-hijack and anti and counter terrorism.
- Mumbai terror attack is a classic example of NSG involvement counter terrorism.

Way forward

- The deployment of NSG will be effective in carrying counter terror operations and control the security situation in J&K.

