

OFFICERS' Pulse

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Coverage.

The Hindu
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At a Glance & In Depth.

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

CURRENT AFFAIRS
WEEKLY

THE PULSE OF UPSC AT
YOUR FINGER TIPS.



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News @ a glance

POLITY

1) Gujarat Anti-Terror Bill

Why in News?

- Gujarat got the presidential approval for its controversial law aimed at fighting “terrorism and organised crime (GCTOC)” as President gave his assent to Gujarat Control of Terrorism and Organised Crime Bill, passed by the state assembly in 2015.

Background:

- The contentious Bill first introduced by then Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi in 2003, failed to get the presidential nod thrice.
- In 2015, the Gujarat government re-introduced the Bill by renaming it the GCTOC, but retained a few controversial provisions. Sixteen years after the first version of it was passed by the Gujarat Assembly, the Gujarat GCTOC has finally become law.

Whether a state law needs presidential assent?

- The Seventh Schedule to the Constitution includes three categories of subjects: ones on which only the centre can legislate, under List I; ones in which only the states can, under List II; and ones on which both the state and the centre can legislate concurrently, under List III.
- This means that the state of India can legislate on any matter in List II. It can also pass laws to override central laws on subjects in List III, as long as it receives the president’s assent, under **Article 254 of the Constitution (which provides that if a State law receives presidential assent after due consideration, then it can apply in contravention to the Central law in that particular State.)**

What are the controversial provisions?

- It allows a confession to be recorded before a police official of Superintendent of Police rank to be admissible in the trial against the accused or any of the other accused in a case
- It allows evidence collected through the “interception of wire, electronic or oral communication” admissible in court against accused
- It allows for the period of investigation to be extended from 90 to 180 days so that the police have more time to keep an accused in custody
- It provides immunity to the state government officials so that no suit or prosecution can be initiated against it for anything which is done in “good faith”
- It prevents an accused from getting bail while in custody.
- The act also provides for death penalty as maximum punishment.

Criticisms:

- The evidence of electronic intercepts is seen as an intrusion on the privacy of citizens (Article 21).
- The accused may be subject to torture by the police to extract confession. Besides confessions made to police is not admissible in court even under the Indian Evidence Act.
- The vague definition of terrorism under the bill leaves scope for misuse as has happened with **Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA), Prevention of Terrorist Activities Act (POTA) and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).**

2) Lack of transparency in High Courts

Why in News?

- A study by Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy has found that there is a large gap

between the judiciary's pronouncements on the Right to Information (RTI) Act and the manner in which the High Courts are implementing it.

About RTI Act

- **The Right to Information Act 2005 mandates timely response to citizen requests for government information.**
- Under the provisions of the Act, any citizen may request information from a "public authority" (a body of Government or "instrumentality of State") which is required to reply expeditiously or **within thirty days**.
- The Act also requires every public authority to **computerise their records** for wide dissemination and to proactively certain categories of information so that the citizens need minimum recourse to request for information formally.

What are the issues?

- The RTI rules of several High Courts provide for a relatively inconvenient procedure when compared to the RTI rules of the Government of India.
- The **lack of good quality proactive disclosures** by several High Courts marks the failure of the High Courts to discharge a specific statutory obligation imposed under Section 4(1)(b) of the RTI Act (*Mandates automatic disclosure for public entities for certain matters.*)
- **Lack of administrative transparency**, especially **financial transparency**, within High Courts is a matter of grave concern.
- The report found that several High Courts have included **patently illegal clauses in their RTI Rules**.
- It pointed out that despite Section 8 of the RTI Act restricting the number of grounds for denying information to citizens, the RTI rules of several High Courts have included additional grounds for rejecting requests for information.
- Several High Courts **did not recognise convenient modes of payments**.
- Example, the High Courts of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, prescribe only court fee stamps as relevant mode of payment. "
- Additionally, the report stated that the Gujarat High Court does not mention any mode of payment, which increases uncertainty for RTI applicants.

- On the **convenience index, not a single High Court was able to match the convenience offered by the Government of India's RTI Rules.**

Conclusion:

- It should be a matter of concern to see the judiciary lagging behind the Centre when it comes to abiding by the letter and spirit of the RTI Act. Transparency is something the judiciary itself must reflect and act on rather than be pushed on the matter by lawmakers and civil society.

3) India on Justice Delivery System

Why in news?

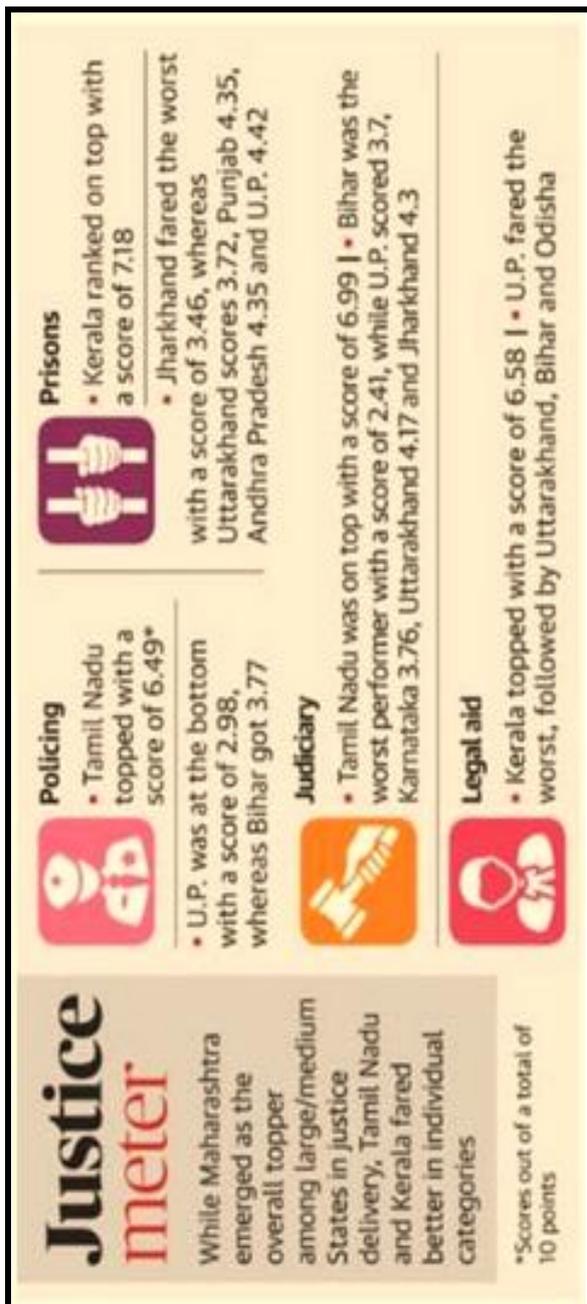
- India Justice Report (IJR) 2019, has been released by Tata Trusts in collaboration with the Centre for Social Justice, Common Cause, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative, DAKSH, TISS- Prayas and Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy.

About India Justice Report 2019

- The India Justice Report ranks 18 large and mid-sized and 7 small states according to their capacity to deliver justice to all. Presently the ranking assesses the four 'pillars' of the justice system, i.e. **police, prisons, legal aid and the judiciary** in each state in order to rank them.
- The report also examines 5-year trends to demonstrate a state's intention to improve access and delivery of justice by increasing resources and clearing blockages.

Key Findings of the Report

- Nationally, there are high **vacancies in the justice system**;
- Over five years, **Gujarat** was the only State to reduce vacancies across all posts across the Police, Prisons and Judiciary.
- **Women are poorly represented** across the Justice system. They account for seven per cent of the Police and about 26.5 percent of all judges in the High Court and subordinate courts.
- The Justice system is **affected by low budget allocations**.



- Punjab was the only Large state whose Police, Prison and Judiciary expenditures were able to increase at a pace higher than the increase in overall state expenditure
- **Under trial prisoners, awaiting investigation**, inquiry or trial, account for 68 per cent of the inmate population .In 33 States and UTs, the share of under trial inmates was above 50 per cent .
- Nationally, there is a **shortage of 4,071 court halls** against the sanctioned number of judges.
- On average, there is **only one correctional staff for every two prisons**

with only 621 correctional staff across 1412 prisons.

4) Office of Profit

Origin :

- The origin of this term can be found in the English Act of Settlement, 1701.
- Under this law, "no person who has an office or place of profit under the King, or receives a pension from the Crown, shall be capable of serving as a member of the House of Commons."
- This was instituted so that there wouldn't be any undue influence from the royal household in administrative affairs.

What is the concept of 'office of profit'?

- MPs and MLAs, as members of the legislature, hold the government accountable for its work.
- The essence of disqualification under the office of profit law is if legislators hold an 'office of profit' under the government, they might be susceptible to government influence, and may not discharge their constitutional mandate fairly.
- The intent is that there should be no conflict between the duties and interests of an elected member.
- Hence, the office of profit law simply seeks to enforce a basic feature of the Constitution- the principle of separation of powers between the legislature and the executive.

The Supreme Court of India in various judgments has held to refer to the following pointers in order to determine whether an office falls within the concept of Office of Profit:

- Whether the appointment has been made by government?
- Whether the government had the right to remove or dismiss those holding such office?
- Whether the government pays the remuneration?
- What are the functions of the office holder? Are these functions any different from the one he/she already performs?
- Does the office holder perform these functions for the government?
- Does the government exercise any control over the performance of those functions?

What the law says

Article 102 (1)(a) says a person shall be disqualified from being a member of either House of Parliament if he holds any office of profit, among other grounds

Article 103 says if a question arises whether a member has incurred such disqualification, it will be referred to the President's decision. The President shall obtain the Election Commission's opinion and act accordingly

Article 191(1) contains a similar provision for MLAs and MLCs in the States. Legislators in Delhi are covered by corresponding provisions in the Government of National Capital Territory Act, 1991



Why should an MLA or an MP not hold an office of profit?

- According to **Articles 102(1)(a) and 191(1)(a) of the Constitution**, an MP or MLA is barred from holding an office of profit as it can put them in a position to gain a financial benefit. And according to law, "A person shall be disqualified for being chosen as, and for being a member of either House of Parliament,
- if he holds any office of profit under the Government of India or the Government of any State, other than an office declared by Parliament by law not to disqualify its holder," .
- Under the Representation of the People Act too, holding an office of profit is grounds for disqualification.

Why in news?

- The Punjab Assembly on Thursday passed a legislation excluding the six ruling

Congress MLA appointed as advisers to the Chief Minister from the office of profit category. And also,

- President Ram Nath Kovind has rejected a petition demanding disqualification of 11 party MLAs for allegedly holding office of profit. The decision of the President rejecting the plea is based on an opinion rendered by the Election Commission.

5) New Indian map

Why in News?

- The President of India issued a notification to define the districts in the two new UTs of Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir that came into being on October 31 as per the J&K Reorganization Act, 2019. The Survey of India has redrawn the map of India to depict these changes.

News in Detail

- The new UT of Ladakh consists of two districts of Kargil and Leh. The rest of the former State of Jammu and Kashmir is in the new UT of J&K
- The Survey of India has redrawn the map of India to depict the newly formed Union Territories (UT) of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and Ladakh.
- Areas such as Gilgit, Gilgit Wazarat, Chilhas and the Tribal Territory of 1947 that have been occupied by Pakistan are included in the Ladakh UT.
- Other areas in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) such as Mirpur and Muzaffarabad have been included in the J&K UT.



What happens on October 31?

- In terms of events, the Lieutenant Governors of the two UTs will take oath of office along with the Chief Justice of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court.

- The Union government appointed serving IAS officer of Gujarat cadre **Girish Chandra Murmu** as the LG of Jammu and Kashmir, and retired bureaucrat of Tripura cadre **Radha Krishna Mathur** as **LG** of Ladakh.
- The two UTs will get their own Chief Secretaries and other top bureaucrats, their own police chiefs and key supervisory officers.
- While Dilbagh Singh will continue to be DG of J&K police, an IG-level officer will head the police in Ladakh. Both forces will remain part of the J&K cadre which will eventually merge with the Union Territory cadre.
- For full-fledged bifurcation, the Reorganisation Act gives a period of one year.

Administration of Union Territories

- Every union territory is **administered by the President** acting through an administrator appointed by him. **Articles 239 to 241 in Part VIII** of the Constitution deal with the union territories.
- The President can specify the designation of an administrator; it may be Lieutenant Governor or Chief Commissioner or Administrator.

Jammu & Kashmir Reorganization Act

- The state of Jammu and Kashmir is **reorganised** into:
 - the Union Territory of **Jammu and Kashmir with a legislature**, and
 - the Union Territory of **Ladakh without a legislature**. (The Union Territory of Ladakh will comprise Kargil and Leh districts, and the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir will comprise the remaining territories of the existing state of Jammu and Kashmir.)
- **Council of Ministers**
- The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir will have a Council of Ministers of not more than ten percent of the total number of members in the Assembly.
- The Council will aid and advise the Lieutenant Governor on matters that the Assembly has powers to make laws. The Chief Minister will communicate all decisions of the Council to the Lieutenant Governor.
- **High Court**

- The High Court of Jammu and Kashmir will be the common High Court for the Union Territories of Ladakh, and Jammu and Kashmir.
- Further, the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir will have an Advocate General to provide legal advice to the government of the Union Territory.
- **Extent of laws:**
- The Schedule lists 106 central laws that will be made applicable to Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh on a date notified by the central government.
- These include the Aadhaar Act, 2016, the Indian Penal Code, 1860, and the Right to Education Act, 2009. Further, it repeals 153 state laws of Jammu and Kashmir. In addition, 166 state laws will remain in force, and seven laws will be applicable with amendments.
- These amendments include lifting of prohibitions on lease of land to persons who are not permanent residents of Jammu and Kashmir.

What happens to the laws that governed the state of J&K?

- Legislative restructuring is a work in progress, with much remaining to be done. While 153 state laws are to be repealed, 166 have been retained.
- Then there is a cosmetic exercise of repealing Acts that mention “applicable to all of India but not the state of Jammu and Kashmir”.
- As of now, the state administration has implemented all that is mentioned in the Reorganization Act as it is.
- But it is also saddled with the massive legislative exercise of arriving at and making state-specific insertions into the 108 central laws that would now be applicable to the two UTs.

New laws

- For example, the state used to have its own Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) which would now be replaced by the central CrPC.
- Unlike the Ranbir Penal Code, which is practically a replica of the Indian Penal Code, Kashmir’s CrPC has many provisions different from the Central CrPC.

- It will have to be seen if any modification needs to be done to suit the state. But a final decision in all these aspects would be taken by Delhi.
- Similarly, there are state-specific insertions that may be done in laws relating to the protection of women and children that have been replaced by the POCSO Act of the Centre.
- While the quota for economically weaker sections has already been added through an amendment, the Centre may want to make some insertions drawing from central Acts.

ENVIRONMENT

1) Bengal's cities yield new species of tree frog

What is in the news?

- A new species of frog has been discovered from **residential areas** in two districts of West Bengal.
- The study was published in **Zootaxa**, which is a peer-reviewed scientific journal for animal taxonomists.
- The study established the mid-sized tree frog as the 26th species under the genus **Polypedates**, found throughout south and Southeast Asia.



About the species

- The new species has been named Brown Blotched Bengal Tree Frog (*Polypedates bengalensis*)
- It is named such because a series of six to **nine dark brown blotches that extend laterally from behind the frog's eye to the vent.**
- The frog's body colour is yellowish-brown to greenish-brown.

2) Clearing the air

Why in news?

- Delhi is once again undergoing in annual, winter pollution crisis.
- The rising prominence of particulate matter (PM) from various sources has long been a public health scourge. But this time the public's ability to monitor pollution levels for themselves have increased through consumer appliances.
- But public awareness and social media angst **haven't translated into meaningful public action.**
- Meteorology and Delhi's geography render the city vulnerable to a certain amount of winter pollution, particularly

when **wind speeds drop to less than 10 kmph.**

How things are mitigated and its issues?

- The **Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP)** in Delhi, which provides a range of actions — from stopping construction work to halting private vehicles — isn't effective when air quality reaches its worst.
- It **recommends action only after pollutants reach their peak.**
- A Task Force — which comprises top officials of Delhi and the Centre — advises the **Environmental Pollution Control Authority**, (refer pulse 21 for more info) which is in charge of enforcing the GRAP.
- Authority can't pressurize municipal bodies and Police to ensure punishment for polluters.

What needs to be done?

- Local sources of pollution from worsening air quality will require both the State and the Centre to implement unpopular decisions. This includes
- An outright ban on two wheelers, three wheelers and cars when air quality starts to deteriorate,
- A halt on construction, shutting down power plants in the vicinity of Delhi and
- A substantial spike in parking rates.
- Getting the farmers of Punjab and Haryana to not burn stubble at all.
- Remove political tussles.

Precaution is better than cure:

- Tackling Delhi's winter air requires tough steps that need to be in place **at least a couple of months before the actual rise in pollution levels.**
- At the very least it requires a **truly empowered, independent agency** that can implement measures while negotiating the tricky relationship between the Centre and Delhi.

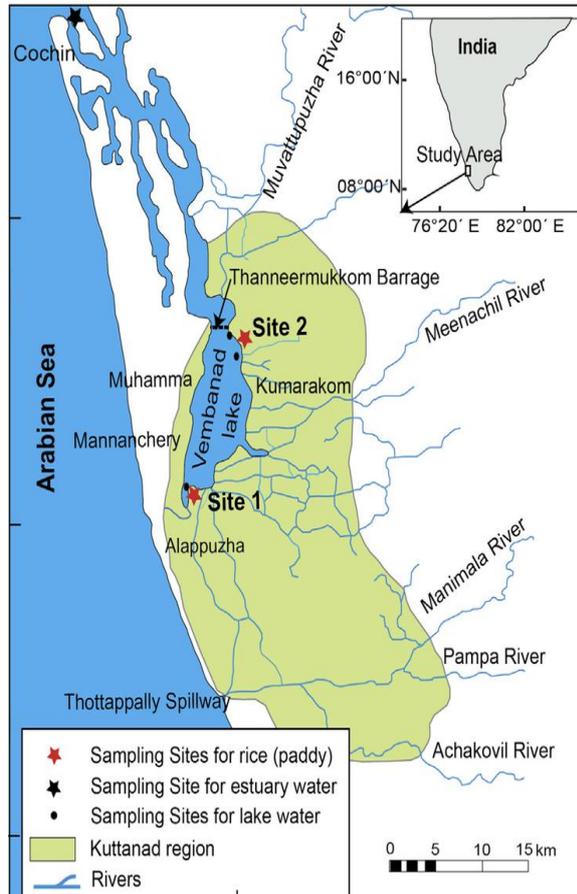
3) Drive to rid Vembanad Lake of plastics

Why in news?

- To reduce plastic pollution in Vembanad Lake exciting offers such collecting 100 plastic bottles and win a relaxing

houseboat cruise on the backwaters of Alappuzha

- It is an initiative launched by the Kerala State Pollution Control Board's (PCB) Alappuzha unit in association with houseboat owners, the Responsible Tourism Mission and various other agencies to rid of plastic waste in Vembanad Lake.



Vembanad Lake

- Vembanad Wetland is spread over the districts of Alappuzha, Kottayam, Ernakulam and Thrissur of Kerala.
- It is the **longest water body** in the country and largest in the state.
- The wetland has an area of 1521.5 km² and volume of 0.55 km³, fed by 10 rivers flowing into it, adding up to a total drainage area of 15,770 sq. km.
- It is a complex aquatic system of 96 km. long coastal backwaters, lagoons, marshes, mangroves and reclaimed lands, with intricate networks of natural channels and man-made canals.
- The wetland is at the heart of Kerala Backwaters tourism with hundreds of **kettuvallams (houseboats)**

crisscrossing it and numerous resorts nestling on its banks.

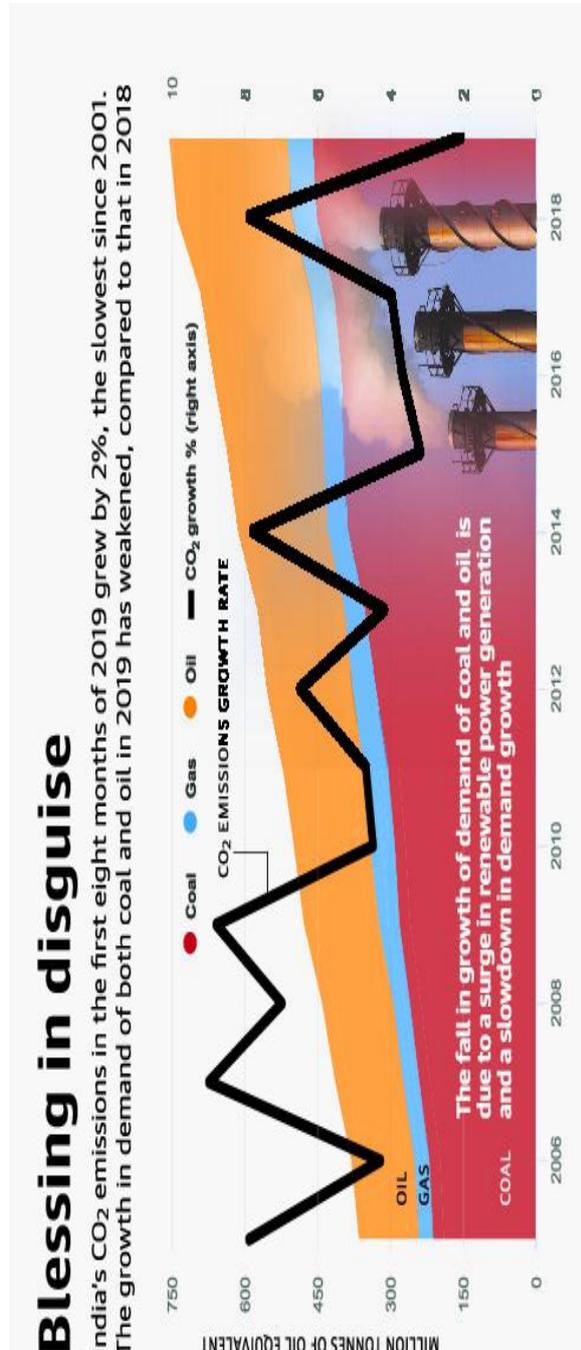
- Five rivers originating in the Western Ghats drain into this water body.
- The **Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary** is located on the east coast of the wetland. Vembanad is famous for its scenic beauty and has become a major tourist attraction.
- The area of Vembanad has **shrunk** from 36,329 hectares in 1834, to 12,504 ha in 1984 and the water holding capacity consequently declined from 2.449 cubic km to 0.559 cubic km.
- The wetland was included in the list of wetlands of international importance, **as defined by the Ramsar Convention** for the conservation and sustainable utilization of wetlands in 2002.
- It is home to more than 20,000 waterfowls (water birds) in India. Major livelihood activities include agriculture, fishing, tourism, inland navigation, coir retting, lime shell collection.
- The lake reduced to 37 per cent of its original area, as a result of land reclamation (is the process of creating new land from oceans, seas, riverbeds or lake beds).
- The uncontrolled mining of shells from the lakebed is also posing a threat to the ecosystem.
- The sewage effluents and the heavy load of organic material released from the neighbouring areas including a medical college at Alappuzha is let into the water and are responsible for the decrease in dissolved oxygen content in the water in the water body.

What is Ramsar Convention?

- The Convention on Wetlands, called the Ramsar Convention, is the intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.
- The Convention was adopted in the Iranian city of Ramsar in 1971 and came into force in 1975. Since then, almost 90% of UN member states, from all the world's geographic regions, have acceded to become "Contracting Parties".

4) Economic slowdown may lighten India's carbon burden

- According to an analysis published in **Carbon Brief**, a site that tracks emission and carbon dioxide trends, has found that there is a connection between economic slowdown and decrease in carbon emissions.



- Carbon dioxide emissions are remarked to **grow at their slowest** — a 2% rise from last year (2018)— since 2001.
- According to data collected from different ministries and sectors, the carbon emissions have grown only 2% in the last 8 months (Jan- August) of 2019.

- This is the lowest rate of annual increase since 2001 from the previous year.

The reasons

- There is sharp downfall for the demand of coal. 2019 has seen only 3% rise in coal demand.
- The renewable energies have gained the demand. For example wind generation rose by 17% in the first six months of 2019 compared to the same period a year earlier, with solar up 30% and hydro increasing by 22%.

Good for the commitments

- These will be good for the Indian commitments at United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), to whom it has promised to **reduce** the emissions intensity of **GDP by 33-35 per cent by 2030 from 2005 levels**.
- It has also committed to having 40% of its energy from renewable sources by 2030.
- According to the report by the **International Energy Emissions Agency** said India's **per capita emissions were about 40%** of the global average and **contributed 7%** (USA- 14%) to the global carbon dioxide burden.

5) U.S. begins formal pull-out from Paris deal

Why in News?

- United States, notified the United Nations of its formal withdrawal from the Paris Agreement, the 2015 global agreement for countries to cut emissions and reverse global warming.
- If inside the agreement the U.S. would be obliged to cut its **emissions to 26%-28% below the 2005 levels by 2025**, as part of its contribution to the Paris goal of keeping global temperature increases in this century to **within 2 degrees Celsius** relative to pre-industrial temperature averages.
- President Donald Trump had said in 2017 that he was taking the U.S. — the world's second largest CO₂ emitter — out of the deal.
- The withdrawal will take a year — until just after the 2020 U.S. Presidential elections.

Why USA is getting itself out?

- The government of USA believes that the agreement brings unfair economic burden on American workers, businesses, and taxpayers by U.S. pledges made under the Agreement.
- The Trump administration believes climate change a hoax created by China and to deviate the USA from its economic aspirations.

Paris Climate Agreement

- At **COP 21 in Paris**, on 12 December 2015, Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) reached a landmark agreement to combat climate change and to accelerate and intensify the actions and investments needed for a sustainable low carbon future.
- The Paris Agreement **entered into force on 4 November 2016**, thirty days after the date on which at least 55 Parties to the Convention accounting in total for at least an estimated 55 % of the total global greenhouse gas emissions
- The Paris Agreement central 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.
- The Paris Agreement requires all Parties to put forward their best efforts through **nationally determined contributions (NDCs)** and to strengthen these efforts in the years ahead. This includes requirements that **all Parties report regularly** on their emissions and on their implementation efforts.

India's NDCs for Paris agreement

- To put forward and further propagate a healthy and sustainable way of living based on traditions and values of conservation and moderation.
- To adopt a climate-friendly and a cleaner path than the one followed hitherto by others at corresponding level of economic development.
- To **reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by 33 to 35 percent by 2030** from 2005 levels.
- To achieve about **40 per cent cumulative** electric power installed capacity from **non-fossil fuel based energy resources by 2030**, with the help of transfer of technology and low cost international finance, including from Green Climate Fund.
- To create an additional **carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent** through **additional forest and tree cover by 2030**.
- To better adapt to climate change by enhancing investments in development programmes in sectors vulnerable to climate change, particularly agriculture, water resources, Himalayan region, coastal regions, health and disaster management.
- To mobilize domestic and new and additional funds from developed countries to implement the above mitigation and adaptation actions in view of the resource required and the resource gap.
- To build capacities, create domestic framework and international architecture for quick diffusion of cutting edge climate technology in India and for joint collaborative R&D for such future technologies.

ECONOMY

1) Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) - Telecom Sector issues

Why in News?

- The **Supreme Court** of India upheld the Department of Telecom (DoT)'s interpretation of "adjusted gross revenue (AGR)", which came as a huge blow to telecom service providers.

Background

- The definition of AGR has been under litigation for 14 years.
- While telecom companies argued that it should comprise revenue from telecom services, the DoT's stand was that the AGR should include all revenue earned by an operator, including that from non-core telecom operations.

Why is AGR important?

- The AGR directly impacts the payments of telcos to the DoT as it is used to calculate the levies payable by operators.
- Currently, telecom operators pay **8% of the AGR as licence fee**, while **spectrum usage charges (SUC) vary between 3-5% of AGR**.

Impact on the telecom companies (Telecos)

- Telecom companies now owe the government not just the shortfall in AGR for the past 14 years but also an interest on that amount along with penalty and interest on the penalty.
- The actual payout can go up to Rs. 1.4 lakh crore.
- The telecom industry is already reeling under a debt of over Rs. 4 lakh crore and has been seeking a relief package from the government.
- The government recently announced setting up of a Committee of Secretaries to examine the financial stress in the sector, and recommend measures to mitigate it.

2) RBI tightens NBFC liquidity norms

About NBFCs

- A Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) is a company registered under the **Companies Act, 1956** engaged in the

business of loans and advances, acquisition of shares/stocks/bonds/debentures/securities issued by Government or local authority or other marketable securities of a like nature, leasing, hire-purchase, insurance business, chit business.

- It does not include any institution whose principal business is that of agriculture activity, industrial activity, purchase or sale of any goods (other than securities) or providing any services and sale/purchase/construction of immovable property.
- A non-banking institution which is a company and has principal business of receiving deposits under any scheme or arrangement in one lump sum or in installments by way of contributions or in any other manner, is also a non-banking financial company (**Residuary non-banking company**).
- Financial activity as principal business is when a company's financial assets constitute more than 50 per cent of the total assets and income from financial assets constitute more than 50 per cent of the gross income. A company which fulfils both these criteria will be registered as NBFC by RBI.

What is the difference between banks & NBFCs?

- NBFCs lend and make investments and hence their activities are akin to that of banks; however there are a few differences as given below:
 - NBFC **cannot accept demand deposits**;
 - NBFCs do not form part of the payment and settlement system and cannot issue cheques drawn on itself;
 - Deposit insurance facility of Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation is not available to depositors of NBFCs, unlike in the case of banks.

Regulators of NBFCs

- Housing Finance Companies, Merchant Banking Companies, Stock Exchanges, stock-broking/sub-broking companies, Venture Capital Fund Companies, Nidhi

Companies, Insurance companies and Chit Fund Companies are NBFCs but they have been exempted from the requirement of registration under the RBI Act, 1934 subject to certain conditions.

- Housing Finance Companies are regulated by **National Housing Bank**, Merchant Banker/Venture Capital Fund Company/stock-exchanges/stock brokers/sub-brokers are regulated by the **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)**, and Insurance companies are regulated by the **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDAI)**.
- Chit Fund Companies are regulated by the respective **State Governments** and Nidhi Companies are regulated by the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs**, Government of India.

Why in News?

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has tightened the liquidity management framework for non-banking financial firms to strengthen their asset-liability management.

News in Detail

- The central bank has prescribed a specific **cap on negative asset liability mismatches** for particular liquidity buckets and also mandated them to **maintain liquidity coverage ratios (LCR)**.
- The guidelines are applicable to all non-deposit-taking NBFCs with an asset size of Rs. 100 crore and above, systemically important Core Investment Companies and all deposit-taking NBFCs irrespective of their asset size.

- **Liquidity coverage ratio (LCR)**
- The liquidity coverage ratio requires banks to **hold enough high-quality liquid assets (HQLA)** – such as short-term government debt – that can be sold to fund banks during a 30-day stress scenario designed by regulators.
- HQLAs mean liquid assets that **can be readily sold or immediately converted into cash** at little or no loss of value, or used as collateral to obtain funds in a range of stress scenarios.
- The LCR was a part of the **Basel III reforms** following the 2008 global financial crisis and was finalised by the

Basel Committee on Banking Supervision in January 2013.

- The LCR requirement will be binding on NBFCs from December 1, 2020, with the minimum HQLAs to be held being 50% of the LCR, progressively reaching up to the required level of **100% by December 1, 2024**.
- Core Investment Companies, Type 1 NBFC-NDs, Non-Operating Financial Holding Companies and Standalone Primary Dealers are exempt from the applicability of LCR norms.

- **Type I - NBFC-ND (non-deposit taking) entities** are those which do not accept public funds and do not have customer interface and do not intend to engage in such activities.

3) Cotton Corporation starts procuring at MSP; Formula for MSP

About Cotton Corporation of MSP

- CCI was established on 31st July 1970 under the administrative control of **Ministry of Textiles**, as a Public Sector Undertaking under the **Companies Act 1956**.
- The major role of the CCI is to undertake **price support operations**, whenever the market prices of kapas (seed cotton) fall below the minimum support prices (MSP), without any quantitative limit.
- To **fulfill the raw material requirement of the domestic textile industry** particularly for lean season, CCI undertakes **commercial purchase operations**.
- It is **headquartered at CBD Belapur** (Central Business District of Belapur), **Navi Mumbai (Maharashtra)**, has 19 branches and around 350 cotton procurement centres in all major cotton growing States.

Agricultural Cost concepts

- The definitions of various costs were standardised in the **'Seminar on Agricultural Prices policies'** organised by the **FAO** (UN Food and Agriculture Organisation) / **ECAFE** (UN Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East) in New Delhi in March – April 1958, with the

co-operation of Govt. of India. These definitions have found general acceptance.

They are summarised below-

- **Cost –A:** Actual paid out costs for owner cultivator. This cost approximates the **actual expenditure incurred in cash and kind** and includes the following items.
 - Hired human labour,
 - Owned and hired bullock labour,
 - Seeds,
 - Manures and fertilisers
 - Implement charges,
 - Land revenue and other taxes,
 - Irrigation charges,
 - Other miscellaneous charges.
- It does not include items like (a) rent paid, (b) estimated rental value of owned land, (c) interest on fixed capital and (d) family human labour.
- **Cost –A-1:** Corresponding **cost** (over and above Cost-A) **for the tenant cultivator**, i.e. **including rent** actually paid by him.
- **Cost –A-2:** Cost A plus **imputed value of own labour**.
- **Cost – B:** Cost A plus **rental value of owned land and imputed interest on demand capital**.
- **Cost – C:** **total of all cost items**, actual as well as imputed.

▪ What Is an Imputed Cost?

- An imputed cost is a cost that is **incurred by virtue of using an asset instead of investing it** or undertaking an alternative course of action.
- An imputed cost is an **invisible cost that is not incurred directly**, as opposed to an explicit cost, which is incurred directly.
- Imputed cost is also known as "**implicit cost**," "**implied cost**," or "**opportunity cost**."

Issues with MSP calculation in India

- The Budget for 2018-19 announced that MSPs would henceforth be fixed at **1½ times of the production costs for crops** as a "pre-determined principle".
- Simply put, the CACP's job will be only to estimate production costs for a season and recommend the MSPs by applying the 1.5-times formula.

- The CACP projects three kinds of production cost for every crop, both at state and all-India average levels.

- 1) **A2'** covers all paid-out costs directly incurred by the farmer — in cash and kind.
 - 2) **'A2+FL'** includes A2 plus an **imputed value of unpaid family labour**.
 - 3) **C2'** is a more comprehensive cost that **factors in rentals and interest forgone on owned land and fixed capital assets**, on top of A2+FL.
- MSP recommendation at present is based on 1.5 times the A2+FL costs.
 - Farm activists, however, say that the 1.5-times MSP formula — originally recommended by the National Commission for Farmers headed by agricultural scientist M S Swaminathan — should have been applied on the C2 costs.

Cost elements considered

- Actual cost elements considered to calculate the comprehensive cost of production includes all paid out costs such as those incurred on account of hired human labour per hour, bullock labour/machine labour, rent paid for leased in land, expenses incurred on use of material inputs like seeds, fertilizers, manures, irrigation charges, depreciation on implements and farm buildings, interest on working capital, diesel electricity for operation of pump sets etc., miscellaneous expenses and imputed value of family labour.

Why in News?

- The Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) has started procuring cotton at minimum support price (MSP) in Punjab, Rajasthan, Haryana and Gujarat.

News in Detail

- Farmers were offering the cotton now **after nearly four years in Punjab and Haryana** which meant they were not getting good market prices now.
- In Rajasthan, too, the CCI did not have MSP operations for the last couple of years.
- The MSP ranges between Rs. 5,450 and Rs. 5,550 per quintal and the market price in many places is lower than that.

4) Alternative Investment Fund for housing sector

About Alternative Investment Fund (AIF)

- An alternative investment is a financial asset that **does not fall into one of the conventional investment categories** such as stocks, bonds, and cash.

SEBI's definition

- In India, alternative investment funds are defined in **Securities and Exchange Board of India (Alternative Investment Funds) Regulations, 2012**.
- It refers to any **privately pooled investment fund**, (whether from **Indian or foreign** sources), in the form of a **trust or a company or a body corporate or a Limited Liability Partnership (LLP)**.
- Hence, in India, AIFs are private funds which are otherwise **not coming under the jurisdiction of any regulatory agency** (including SEBI's mutual fund regulations) in India.
- Venture capital funds and hedge funds are some examples of AIFs.

▪ Venture capital funds

- These are investment funds that manage the money of investors who seek private equity stakes in **start-up (new ventures)** and small-to-medium-sized enterprises with **strong growth potential**.
- These investments are generally characterized as **high-risk/high-return** opportunities.
- Venture capital funds are considered **seed money or early-stage capital**.

Hedge fund

- It is a **private investment partnership and funds pool** that uses varied, **complex and aggressive proprietary strategies** and invests or trades in complex products, including listed and unlisted derivatives.
- Hedge fund investors typically include **high net worth individuals (HNIs)** and families, endowments and pension funds, insurance companies, and banks.
- These funds work either as **private investment partnerships or offshore investment corporations**.
- They are **not required to be registered with the securities markets regulator (SEBI)** and are not subject to the reporting requirements.

Categories of Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs)

- Following three categories of AIFs are specified under SEBI Regulations 2012:
- **Category I:** Mainly invests in **start-ups, SME's** (small and medium enterprises) or any other sector which Govt. considers **economically and socially viable**.
- **Category II:** AIFs such as **private equity funds or debt funds** for which **no specific incentives or concessions are given by the government** or any other Regulator
- **Category III :** AIFs such as **hedge funds** or funds which trade with a view to make **short term returns** or such other funds which are **open ended** and for which **no specific incentives or concessions are given by the government** or any other Regulator.

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet has approved the creation of an **Alternative Investment Fund (AIF)** of **Rs. 25,000 crore** to provide last-mile funding for **stalled**

affordable and middle-income housing projects across the country.

News in Detail

- The fund size will **initially be Rs. 25,000 crore** with the **government providing Rs. 10,000 crore** and the **State Bank of India** and the **Life Insurance Corporation** providing the balance.
- The funds will be set up as **Category-II Alternative Investment Fund registered with SEBI** and will be **managed by SBICAP Ventures Limited**.

5) Core Investment Company (CIC)

About Core Investment Company (CIC)

- A CIC is a **non-banking financial company (NBFC)** which carries on the **business of acquisition of shares and securities** not for the purpose of trading but **for holding stake**.
- They hold not less than 90% of its net assets in the form of investment in equity shares, preference shares, bonds, debentures, debt or loans in group companies.
- Further investments in equity shares in group companies constitute not less than 60% of its net assets, according to RBI norms.

Why in News?

- A working group set up by the Reserve Bank of India to review the regulatory and supervisory framework for core investment companies (CIC) has suggested that such entities should only have a two-tier structure, and stronger boards, with at least 50% independent directors.

6) Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC)

About FSDC

- The FSDC is an apex-level body constituted by the government of India.
- The aim of FSDC is to strengthen and institutionalise the mechanism of **maintaining financial stability and financial sector development** among others.
- The Council is **headed by the Finance Minister**.
- The body also includes the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor and chairpersons of the Securities and Exchange Board of

India (SEBI), Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority (IRDA), Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority and Chief Economic Advisor as its members along with other senior officers of the Government of India and Financial Sector Regulators.

Why in News?

- The **21st Meeting** of the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) was held under the Chairmanship of the Union Minister for Finance & Corporate Affairs.

7) Sovereign Credit Rating

What is a credit rating?

- A credit rating is a grade awarded by credit rating agencies to a sovereign state or large corporate borrower **indicating the probability of default and their creditworthiness**.
- It is a large-scale version of the credit score awarded to individuals who wish to borrow.
- The higher the rating, the lower the interest rate the borrower will face.

What is a sovereign credit rating?

- It is a **credit rating specifically given to a country** or other sovereign entity.
- A credit rating agency will **assess a country's economy** and provide it with an appropriate score.
- **Standard and Poor's (S&P), Moody's and Fitch** are the three main agencies which provide credit ratings to sovereign states.

Significance of sovereign credit rating

- A country's rating can significantly **influence its ability to borrow money**, since it's applied to any bonds issued by its government.
- A credit rating shows that a country is willing to be transparent about its finances, by allowing an external agency to objectively review its economy.
- Investors use sovereign credit ratings as a **way to assess the riskiness** of a particular country's bonds.
- Away from bonds, a good sovereign credit rating can help a country to **secure foreign direct investment** as those with

stronger ratings are more likely to prove attractive to international investors.

Why in News?

- **Moody's Investors Service**, the investor-focussed arm of ratings agency Moody's, has **downgraded its outlook on India to 'negative'** from 'stable'. The agency, however, has retained India's credit rating at **Baa2**.

About Moody's Rating Outlooks

- A Moody's rating outlook is an **opinion regarding the likely direction of a rating over the medium term**.
- Rating outlooks fall into the following **four categories**:
 - 1) Positive (POS) P
 - 2) Negative (NEG) N
 - 3) Stable (STA) S
 - 4) Developing (DEV -- dependent upon an event) D
- A stable outlook indicates a low likelihood of a rating change over the medium term.
- A negative, positive or developing outlook indicates a higher likelihood of a rating change over the medium term.

Moody's credit rating scale

- Moody's rating scale, which ranges from a **maximum Aaa to a minimum C**, consists of 21 notches and two categories:
- Investment category for the financially sound companies.
- Speculative category for companies with a higher risk of defaulting.
- The rating **Aaa** corresponds to **highest quality and lowest level of credit risk** while '**C**' is the lowest rating (typically in default) which signifies **little prospect for recovery of principal or interest**.
- **India**, with **Baa2** rating, is said to be **medium-grade** and subject to **moderate credit risk** and as such may possess certain speculative characteristics.
- Moody's defines credit risk as the risk that an entity may not meet its contractual financial obligations (including bonds) as they come due and any estimated financial loss in the event of default or impairment.

8) Onions to be imported

Background

- The tight supply of onions in the domestic market was caused mostly by late rains destroying the early kharif harvest and disrupting storage and transport; even as last season's rabi stocks ran out.
- The situation was exacerbated by hoarders and black-marketers.
- At least 12 States have indicated severe shortages.
- The government had earlier capped the stock limit and banned export of onion. For further details, refer *Officer's Pulse Issue No. 16 and 17*.

Why in News?

- With onion prices breaching the Rs. 100 per kg mark in Delhi and soaring to Rs. 80 in other metros, the Centre has decided to import the staple from Dubai, Egypt, Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan.

News in Detail

- The Union government decided to import onion as its efforts to increase supply by banning exports and setting stock limits for retailers and traders also failed to tame prices.
- Public sector trading agency Metals and Minerals Trading Corporation of India (MMTC), which operates under the Commerce Ministry, has issued a tender to import 2,000 tonnes from Dubai, where stocks are available.
- A team of officials of MMTC, National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd.(NAFED), the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Consumer Affairs has been directed to visit Turkey and Egypt on an urgent basis to take stock of the supplies in these countries and facilitate imports.

9) SEBI pulls up PSUs on public holding

About SEBI

- The **Securities and Exchange Board of India** was established on April 12, 1992 in accordance with the provisions of the **Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992**.
- The basic functions of the Securities and Exchange Board of India are "**to protect the interests of investors** in securities and to promote the development of, and to **regulate the securities market** and

for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto".

Why in News?

- At a capital market seminar organised by industry body CII, SEBI chairman has observed that **nearly half of the government-owned listed companies** (45 out of 91 listed PSUs) are **yet to comply with the minimum public shareholding norms** that stipulate that

at least 25% stake should be held by the public.

Background

- SEBI mandated the current 25% minimum public shareholding norm way back in 2010.
- The government, in the Union Budget 2019-20, proposed increasing the minimum public holding in all listed entities to 35% from the current 25% limit.

International Relations

1) International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

About ICAO

- It is a **UN specialized agency**, established in **1944** to manage the administration and **governance of the Convention on International Civil Aviation (Chicago Convention)**, signed on 7 December 1944.
- ICAO works with the Convention's **193 Member States** and industry groups to reach consensus on **international civil aviation Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs)** and policies in support of a safe, efficient, secure, economically sustainable and **environmentally responsible** civil aviation sector.

Convention on International Civil Aviation - Doc 7300

- The Convention establishes rules of airspace, aircraft registration and safety, and details the rights of the signatories in relation to air travel; it also exempts air fuels from tax.
- The Convention provided for the **sovereignty of airspace** above the territory of each state, together with five **freedoms** (later expanded to nine) which govern the freedom of states to operate air transport flights (including the carriage of passengers, cargo and mail) across, into and within the airspace of other states.
- Only the first two of these freedoms (Right to overfly a foreign country without landing and Right to refuel or carry out maintenance in a foreign country) apply automatically to signatory states, the remainder being subject to national agreement.
- The Convention also concerns the **issue and recognition of certificates** (e.g. an aircraft's certificate of airworthiness (C of A) or an **airline's air operator certificate (AOC) and licences** (e.g. pilot licensing or controller licensing).

Why in News?

- ICAO has clarified that it is **“not empowered to intervene** in the affairs of a country and will examine inputs from both India and Pakistan before it takes a decision to pursue the issue of denial of overflight to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's aircraft during his recent visit to Saudi Arabia.

Background

- Pakistan has been inconsistent in its policy on permitting overflight for Indian VVIP planes ever since it shut its airspace for all commercial flights from April to August this year following IAF strikes at at Balakot.
- It allowed former Minister for External Affairs, late Sushma Swaraj, in May and Mr. Modi's plane in June to fly through its skies for the SCO summit in Bishkek.
- But in September, permission was first denied for President Ram Nath Kovind's flight and then for the PM's flight to the U.S.
- India's request was again rejected in October for Mr. Modi's travel to Saudi Arabia via Pakistan airspace.
- In this context, India had approached ICAO to intervene.

Why did the ICAO not intervene?

- Article 3 of the Chicago Convention clearly states that the treaty **“shall be applicable only to civil aircraft, and shall not be applicable to State aircraft.”**
- The treaty also underlines in Article 1 that signatories to the convention have to recognise that **“every State has complete and exclusive sovereignty over the airspace above its territory.”**

2) Broad-based Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) - India and EU

About BTIA

- On 28th June 2007, **India and the European Union (EU) began negotiations** on a broad-based Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA) in Brussels, Belgium.
- These negotiations are pursuant to the commitment made by political leaders at

the 7th India-EU Summit held in Helsinki on 13th October 2006 to move towards negotiations for a broad-based trade and investment agreement on the basis of the report of India-EU High Level Technical Group.

- India and the EU expect to promote bilateral trade by **removing barriers to trade** in goods and services and investment across all sectors of the economy.

Issues with BTIA

- Despite multiple rounds of negotiations, India and the EU have not been able to conclude it because of differences in some important areas.
- While the EU is unhappy with India's offers in the area of automobiles and wines & spirits, India wants more access for its professionals and recognition as a data secure country.

Why in News?

- Upon the visit of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, India and Germany agreed to deepen efforts to resume stalled negotiations for the free trade agreement between India and the European Union (EU).

Other outcomes of the visit

- Germany pledged to invest €1 billion over the next five years on environmentally-friendly urban mobility in India.
- Germany would also put in €200 million to reform the bus sector in Tamil Nadu.
- For further details about the outcomes of the visit, refer *Officer's Pulse Issue No. 21*.

3) Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

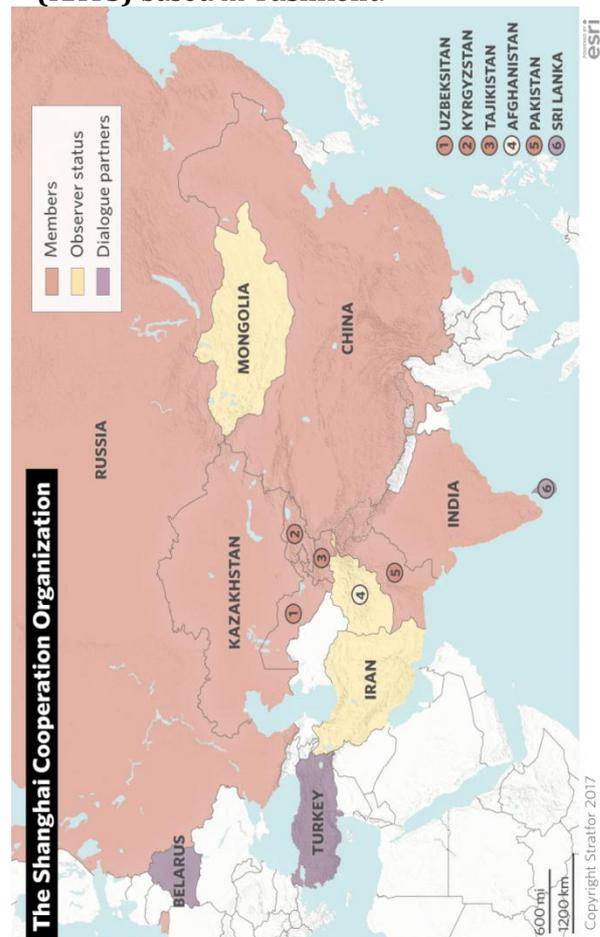
About SCO

- It is a **Eurasian political, economic and military** organisation, which was founded in Shanghai by the leaders of **China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan** in the year **2001**.
- It was **preceded by the Shanghai Five** mechanism which was founded in 1996.
- There are now **eight member states**. Apart from the five founding members, **Uzbekistan** joined the group later as a permanent member. **India and Pakistan** are the latest members which joined in 2017.

- There are **four observer states**, namely Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia and **six dialogue partners**, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey, and Sri Lanka.

Organisation structure

- The Heads of State Council (HSC) is the supreme decision-making body in the SCO. It meets once a year and adopts decisions and guidelines on all important matters of the organisation.
- The SCO Heads of Government Council (HGC) meets once a year to discuss the organisation's multilateral cooperation strategy and priority areas.
- The SCO's official languages are Russian and Chinese.
- The organisation has two permanent bodies — the **SCO Secretariat** based in **Beijing** and the **Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS)** based in **Tashkent**.



Why in News?

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh represented India at the SCO heads of state meeting in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

4) India, Uzbekistan sign three defence MoUs

Why in News?

- India and Uzbekistan signed three memorandums of understanding (MoU) to enhance cooperation in military medicine and military education during the visit of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

News in Detail

- The first India-Uzbekistan Joint Exercise, "Dustlik 2019" was inaugurated. The bilateral exercise will be conducted at Chirchiq Training Area near Tashkent and will be focused on counter-terrorism.
- India has offered a concessional line of credit of \$40 million for procurement of goods and services by Uzbekistan from India.
- Two institution-to-institution MoUs on training and capacity building between institutes of higher military learning of the two countries were also signed.

5) Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)

About APEC

- APEC is a regional economic forum established in 1989 to leverage the growing interdependence of the Asia-Pacific.
- APEC's aim is to create greater prosperity for the people of the region by promoting balanced, inclusive, sustainable, innovative and secure growth and by accelerating regional economic integration.
- In 1993, annual APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting was established to provide greater strategic vision and direction for cooperation in the region.
- The APEC Secretariat is based in Singapore and operates as the core support mechanism for the APEC process.

Membership of APEC

- There are 21 member economies at present.
- The founding members (12) were Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and the United States.

- Later members: China, Hong Kong, Chinese Taipei, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Chile, Peru, Russia and VietNam.
- APEC has three official observers: the Association of Southeast Asian Nations Secretariat, the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat.
- India is a non-member.

Why in News?

- Chile has pulled out of hosting two major international summits- APEC summit and UN climate change conference, due to unrest caused by anti-government protests.

News in Detail



- The COP25 climate summit was scheduled for 2 to 13 December, while the APEC trade forum was due to be held in Santiago from 15 to 17 November.
- The demonstrations were originally triggered by a now-suspended rise in the price of metro fares in Santiago.
- However protesters are now marching to express their discontent over a wide

variety of problems ranging from inequality to the high cost of healthcare.

6) The Agreement on Reciprocal Logistics Support (ARLS) - Indo-Russia

What are military logistics agreement?

- Logistics agreements are administrative arrangements facilitating **access to military facilities** for **exchange of fuel and provisions** on mutual agreement when the Indian military is operating abroad.

Benefits of military logistics agreement

- It will simplify logistical support and increase operational turnaround of the military away from India.
- The biggest beneficiary of the logistics pacts has been the Navy which interacts and exercises the most with foreign navies.
- When operating on the high seas, exercises or during humanitarian assistance missions' fuel, food and other needs can be exchanged and settled through the established modalities later.

Why in News?

- India and Russia were expected to conclude a mutual logistics agreement-Agreement on Reciprocal Logistics Support (ARLS), during the visit of Defence Minister to Moscow.

Other outcomes of the visit

- The **19th India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Military and Military Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-M&MTC)** meeting was held in Moscow.
- India and Russia agreed to form specific working groups for after sales support of key defence platforms and intensify efforts to finalise a cooperation programme for 2021-2030.
- Russia affirmed its readiness to operationalise the **joint venture Indo-Russia Rifles Private Limited** for the manufacture of world class **Kalashnikov AK 203 rifles** in India at the earliest.
- In September, the two countries had signed an **Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA)** for mutual cooperation in **joint manufacturing of spares, components, aggregates** and other

material related to Russian or Soviet-origin defence equipment.

Other military logistics agreement of India

- India signed the **Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Understanding (LEMOA)** with the **U.S.** in August **2016** after decade-long negotiations.
- The logistics pact with **France** signed in March, **2018**; allow Indian warships access to French bases at the **Reunion Islands** near Madagascar and **Djibouti** in the Horn of Africa.
- India has concluded several such agreements with **Oman**, the **Philippines** and **Singapore** and gained access to the **Sabang port in Indonesia**.

Military logistics agreement under discussion

- Military Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) with **Australia** and Japan are in advanced stages and are expected to be concluded by the year-end.
- The MLSA with **Japan** is called the **Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA)**.
- The agreement with Australia will be broadly on the lines of the U.S. one, while the one with Japan is a broader defence cooperation agreement including logistics.

7) International Criminal Court (ICC)

About ICC

- The International Criminal Court (ICC) is a **permanent judicial body** established by the **Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998)**.
- Though the Rome Statute was negotiated within the UN, ICC was created as an **independent judicial body** distinct from the UN.
- ICC investigates and tries **individuals** charged with the **gravest crimes** of concern to the international community: **genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression**.
- The court began sittings on July 1, **2002**, after the requisite number of countries (60) ratified the agreement.
- It is headquartered at **The Hague, Netherlands**.

- The court's jurisdiction extends to offenses that occurred after July 1, 2002, that were committed either in a state that has ratified the agreement or by a national of such a state.
- The ICC was **established as a court of last resort** to prosecute the most heinous offenses in cases where national courts fail to act.

Membership

- 122 countries are States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.
- Prominent countries that are not members include the United States, China, India, Iraq, Libya, Yemen, Qatar and Israel.
- USA and Russia had signed the treaty but did not ratify it.

Why in News?

- ICC handed Congolese rebel chief Bosco Ntangada a 30-year jail term for war crimes, the highest ever sentence passed by the tribunal.

Comparison of ICC and ICJ

S.No.	International Criminal Court (ICC)	International Court of Justice (ICJ)
1	▪ Independent judicial body distinct from the UN	▪ Principal judicial organ of the UN
2	▪ Handles prosecutions of individuals	▪ Hears disputes between sovereign states
3	▪ Established by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (1998) in 2002	▪ Established in 1945 by the San Francisco Conference, which also created the UN
4	▪ Only those who ratified the Rome Statute are parties to ICC	▪ All members of the UN are parties to the statute of the ICJ, and nonmembers

		may also become parties
5	▪ The judges and of the Prosecutor and the Deputy Prosecutor(s) are elected by the 'Assembly of States Parties'	▪ The judges are elected by the UN General Assembly and the Security Council
6	▪ Headquarters of both the courts are situated at The Hague, Netherlands.	

8) Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)

About JCPOA

- The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is a **nuclear deal** reached by **Iran** and the **P5+1 (China, France, Germany, Russia, U.K., and U.S.)** on July 14, 2015.
- Under the agreement, **Iran dismantled much of its nuclear program** and gave international inspectors (International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)) extensive access to its facilities in exchange for relief from economic sanctions.
- Intent of the agreement was to set back Iran's nuclear program so that if Iran were to pursue a nuclear weapon, the amount of time it would need to produce enough fissile material—an indicator known as "**breakout time**"—would be at least a year, up from just a few weeks.
- To extend that breakout time, the agreement requires that uranium enrichment at **Fordow** and **Natanz** be restricted and a heavy-water reactor at **Arak**, have its core rendered inoperable.

US pull-out from JCPOA

- The **United States unilaterally withdrew** from the agreement in May **2018**, reinstating the banking and oil sanctions.
- The US objected to the agreement's failure to address **Iran's ballistic missile**

program or its **proxy warfare** in the region, and claimed that the agreement would enable Iran to pursue a nuclear bomb in the future.

- Iran accused the United States of renegeing on its commitments, and Europe of submitting to U.S. unilateralism.
- The US threatened countries that import oil from Iran including India with economic sanctions; it was intended to bring Iran's oil exports to zero, denying the regime its principal source of revenue.
- This was the tipping point for Iran, which said it would no longer be bound to its commitments as long as the other parties to the JCPOA were in breach of theirs.
- In July 2019, Iran exceeded the agreed-upon limits to its stockpile of low-enriched uranium, and then began enriching uranium to the higher concentration used in medical isotopes.

About Instrument In Support Of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX)

- The **special purpose vehicle** INSTEX aims to **facilitate trade between the EU and Iran** to get around US sanctions.
- It is an EU-backed system launched by **Germany, France and U.K.**
- The new entity acts as a sort of **euro-denominated clearing house** for Iran to conduct trade with European companies.

- In effect, INSTEX works as a **barter arrangement** operating outside of the US-dominated global financial system.
- Trade is initially expected to focus on non-sanctionable essential goods such as humanitarian, medical and farm products.
- It is **not expected to address oil-related transactions.**



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Why in News?

- Iran resumed uranium enrichment at its underground Fordow plant south of Tehran in a new step back from its commitments under the landmark 2015 nuclear deal, raising alarm from Western powers.

SCIENCE and TECHNOLOGY

1) Dhanush artillery guns

About Dhanush guns

- Dhanush is the **first indigenously built 155 mm, 45 calibre long-range artillery gun** with strike range of **38 kilometres**.
- It is an **upgrade of the existing 155m, 39 calibre Bofors FH 77 gun**.
- The gun is equipped with **inertial navigation** (with **GPS**)-based sighting system, **auto-laying facility** (taking aim), on-board ballistic computation and an advanced day-night direct firing system.
- The self-propulsion unit allows the gun to negotiate and deploy itself in the field.
- The gun is also fitted with an **automated gun sighting system** equipped with camera, thermal imaging and laser range finder.
- Automated technology allows three to six guns to be fired simultaneously at a single target, each gun having a capacity to fire 42 rounds in an hour.
- The weight of the gun is **under 13 tonnes**, making it easy to mobilise in hilly terrain and remote areas.
- It is a versatile weapon that **can operate in all climatic conditions**.
- It is being manufactured by the **Gun Carriage Factory, Jabalpur** under the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB).
- The Dhanush is a joint effort by the OFB, the Army, Defence Research and Development Organisation, Directorate General Quality Assurance, PSUs Bharat Electronics Limited, SAIL, and private firms.

Ordnance Factory Board (OFB)

- Ordnance Factory Board is the **world's largest government-operated production organisation**, and the **oldest organisation run by the Government of India**.
- Indian Ordnance Factories is a giant industrial setup which functions under the **Department of Defence Production** of the **Ministry of Defence**.
- **Headquartered at Kolkata**, it is a conglomerate of **41 Factories**, 9 Training

Institutes, 3 Regional Marketing Centres and 4 Regional Controller of Safety.

- The ordnance factories form an integrated base for indigenous production of defence hardware and equipment, with the primary objective of self-reliance in equipping the armed forces with state of the art battlefield equipment.

Why in News?

- The Indian Army, which began inducting the indigenously upgraded Dhanush artillery guns, will have the **first regiment in place by March 2020** and will get **all 114 guns by 2022**.
- The Army recently procured **155mm Excalibur precision guided ammunition** from the U.S. For further details, refer *Officer's Pulse Issue No. 19*.

2) ISRO's NavIC set to be commercialised by Antrix

Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) - NavIC

- IRNSS is an **independent regional navigation satellite system** being developed by India.
- It is designed to provide accurate position information service to users in **India as well as the region extending up to 1500 km from its boundary**, which is its **primary service area**.
- IRNSS will provide two types of services, namely, **Standard Positioning Service (SPS)** which is provided to all the users and **Restricted Service (RS)**, which is an **encrypted service provided only to the authorised users**.
- The IRNSS System is expected to provide a **position accuracy of better than 20 m** in the primary service area.
- The space segment consists of the IRNSS constellation of eight satellites (with one being a replacement).
- **Three satellites** are located in the **geostationary** orbit and the remaining **four** are located in **geosynchronous** orbits.
- Some potential applications of the regional navigation system include: terrestrial, aerial and marine navigation;

disaster management; vehicle tracking and fleet management; integration with mobile phones; precise timing (as for ATMs and power grids); mapping and

geodetic data capture; as terrestrial navigation aid for hikers and travellers; and for visual and voice navigation for drivers.

PROVIDES INDIA WITH ASSURED NAVIGATION SERVICE FOR VITAL CIVILIAN & MILITARY APPLICATIONS WITHOUT HAVING TO DEPEND ON ANOTHER COUNTRY; FIRST SATELLITE TO BE LAUNCHED ON JULY 1; REMAINING 6 BY 2015

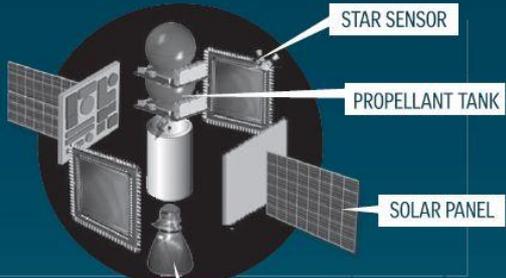
IRNSS: INDIAN REGIONAL NAVIGATION SATELLITE SYSTEM

7 SATELLITES

3 GEOSTATIONARY
4 GEOSYNCHRONOUS

ORBIT ALTITUDE **36,000** KM

COST **₹ 1,420** CRORES



Covers India and up to 1,500 km beyond its borders	3 extremely accurate rubidium atomic clocks in each satellite	GPS receivers will not work; need special receivers (yet to be developed)
IRNSS provides Standard Positioning Service	Open to all users	Accuracy better than 20 metres

4 satellites in geosynchronous orbit – in pairs, move in two inclined orbits – appear from ground to travel in figure '8' – assist in accurate position determination

3 satellites in geostationary orbit – appear from ground to be at fixed positions in the sky



Antrix Corporation

- Antrix Corporation Limited (Antrix), incorporated on 28 September **1992** (under the Companies Act, 1956), is a **wholly owned Government of India Company** under the administrative control of **Department of Space (DOS)**.
- Antrix is the **commercial arm** of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- Antrix promotes and commercially markets the products and services emanating from the Indian Space Programme.
- In the year 2008, the Company was awarded '**MINIRATNA**' status.

Why in News?

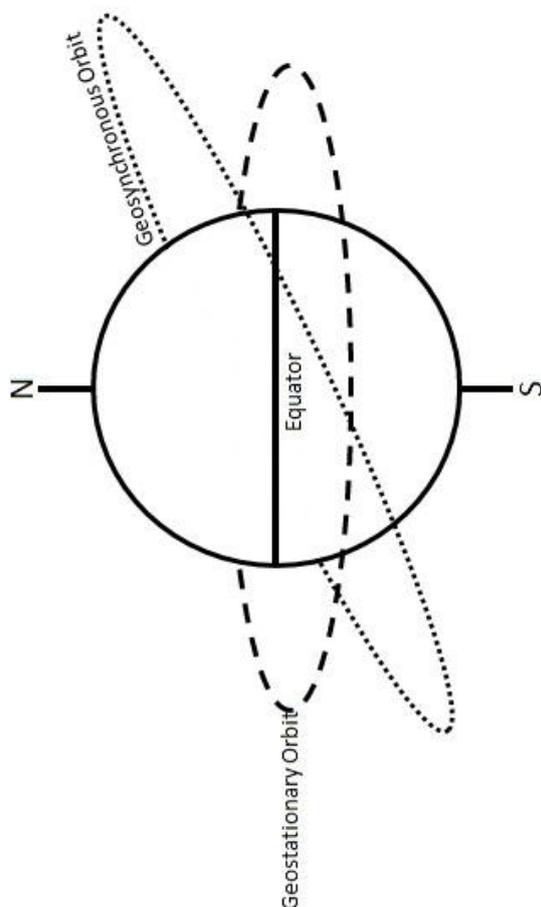
- The ISRO and its commercial arm Antrix Corporation Ltd. are poised to commercialise India's regional navigation satellite system, NavIC, with Antrix recently floating two separate tenders to identify industries that can develop dedicated NavIC-based hardware and systems.

Other related developments - taking NavIC closer to end users

- **Qualcomm Technologies, Inc.**, a leading producer of semiconductor chips, had **developed and tested NavIC-friendly chipsets** across its user bases.

- Global standards body **3rd Generation Partnership Project (3GPP)**, which develops protocols for mobile telephony, has **approved India's regional navigation system NavIC**.
- The specification approval will boost commercial use of NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation) by international and domestic mobile device makers, which means such manufacturers can now mass-produce navigation devices compatible with NavIC so that users of these devices can easily access desi GPS or NavIC signals.
- Telecommunications Standards Development Society, India (TSDSI), will soon adopt these specifications as a national standard.
- The implications of NavIC acceptance by 3GPP would bring NavIC technology to the commercial market for its use in 4G, 5G and Internet of Things (IoT).

Geostationary vs Geosynchronous orbits



Geosynchronous Orbit

- Following are the features of Geosynchronous Orbit:

- The orbit around the Earth with **orbit period equal to one sidereal day (i.e. 23 Hrs, 56 minutes, 4 seconds)** is known as geosynchronous orbit. The word "synchronous" means object in this orbit returns to the same position after period of 1 sidereal day to the observer on the Earth's surface.
- There **many such orbits** around the Earth.
- It **may be circular or non-circular types**.
- Geosynchronous satellite has an inclination with respect to equator.

Geostationary Orbit

- Following are the features of Geostationary Orbit:
- The circular orbit at an altitude of **35768 Kms** above the equator of the Earth which follows direction of rotation of the Earth is known as geostationary orbit.
- Object in this **orbit has a period equal to the rotation period of the earth**. Hence it **appears motionless from earth or at fixed position** to observers on the ground w.r.t. his/her position. This is similar to how star looks to observers on the earth. Hence the word "stationary".
- There is **only one such orbit** around the Earth.
- It is **one type of Geosynchronous orbit**.
- It is circular orbit.
- Geostationary satellite has **zero inclination with respect to the equator**.
- Note: Every Geostationary orbit is a geosynchronous orbit but the reverse is not possible.

3) Astrosat views star formation in jellyfish galaxies

- **About Astrosat**
- ASTROSAT is India's **first dedicated multi wavelength space observatory**.
- This scientific satellite mission endeavours for a more detailed understanding of our universe.
- ASTROSAT observes universe in the **optical, ultraviolet, low and high energy X-ray regions of the electromagnetic spectrum**, whereas most other scientific satellites are capable of observing a narrow range of wavelength band.

- AstroSat was launched on September 28, 2015 by PSLV-C30. The minimum useful life of the AstroSat mission is expected to be 5 years.

About Jellyfish galaxies

- Jellyfish galaxies are called so because they are shaped like **discs** that have many **tentacle-like arms** streaming away from the disc.
- They are formed when a disc-shaped galaxy rams into a galaxy cluster, which a dense region containing many hundreds or thousands of galaxies is packed into a small region.
- As the individual galaxy rams into the galaxy cluster, the cold gas in its disc interacts with the hot plasma in the cluster.
- Acting like a strong wind, the plasma in the cluster strips away the cold molecular gas of the disc, causing it to stream behind like tentacles.
- Unlike usual galaxies that have stars forming in the disc, the jellyfish galaxies have star formation in the tentacles also.

Why in News?

- Astrosat using its **Ultraviolet Imaging Telescope (UVIT)** have recently observed a jelly fish galaxy, **JW100**.

Background

- Astrosat has joined a programme called **GASP (Gas Stripping Phenomena in galaxies with MUSE)** of the **European Southern Observatory**.
- The programme aims to observe 100 gas-stripping jellyfish galaxies using the MUSE Integral Field SpectrographChile.

4) DTrack - Malware that infected KKNPL

What is DTrack ?

- **Dtrack** is a **malware** devised by the **Lazarus APT** group of **North Korea** and is known to infect critical systems related to industrial units.
- In the year 2017, it was devised to hack ATMs across South Korea by the North Korean intelligence and is now reported to be used on the digital infrastructure of India.
- Security researchers claim that the Dtrack malware virus can record keylogging (key strokes), retrieve browser history, gather host IP addresses, gather details of

running processes, and listing out files available on the disk volumes.

Why in News?

- The Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) had admitted that its digital infrastructure with respect to a reported malware infection in the systems of Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant. The malware was later identified to be DTrack.

News in Detail

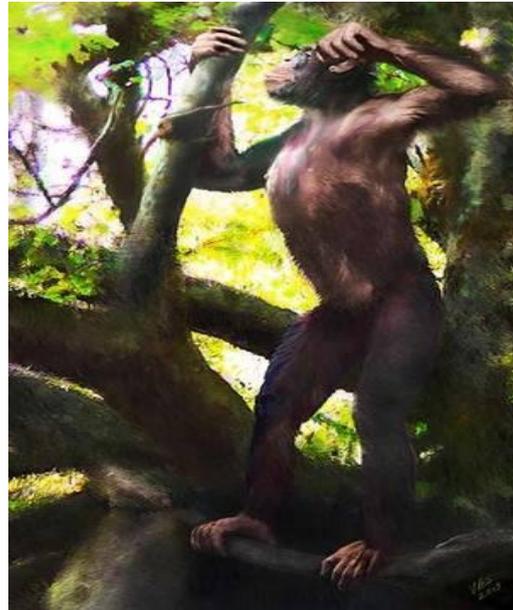
- Though CERT-In had conveyed the potential cyber-attack to NPCIL on September 4, 2019, NPCIL confirmed it only by October 30, 2019.
- The NPCIL claimed that the malware hit a non-critical “administrative computer” that was connected to the Internet, but not to the Nuclear Power Plant Control System.

5) Danuvius - Ape fossil gives clues to bipedalism

Why in News?

- Fossils unearthed in southern Germany of a remarkable ape that lived about **11.6 million years ago** give new clues to the understanding of the evolutionary origins of a fundamental human trait - walking upright on two legs (bipedalism).

News in Detail



- The ape, called **Danuvius guggenmosi**, combined attributes of humans - straight lower limbs adapted for bipedalism - with those of apes - long arms able to stretch out to grasp tree branches.

- That indicates Danuvius was able to walk upright on two legs and also use all four limbs while clambering through trees.
- It is the **oldest-known example of upright walking in apes.**

Prevailing notion of how bipedalism evolved

- The present understanding is that 6 million years ago in East Africa a chimpanzee-like ancestor started to walk on two legs after environmental changes created open landscapes and savannahs where forests once dominated.

New insight into evolution of bipedalism

- The discovery suggests that bipedalism originated in a common ancestor of humans and the great apes - a group that includes chimpanzees, bonobos, gorillas and orangutans - that inhabited Europe rather than an ancestor from Africa.
- Until now, the oldest fossil evidence of bipedalism in humankind's evolutionary tree dated to about 6 million years ago: fossils from **Kenya** of an extinct member of the human lineage called **Orrorin tugenensis** as well as footprints on the Mediterranean island of Crete.
- If Danuvius turns out to be ancestral to humans, that would mean that some of its descendants at some point made their way to Africa.
- Danuvius indicates that upright walking originated in the trees, not on the ground, and that humankind's last common ancestor with apes did not go through a stage of hunched knuckle-walking, as previously thought.

Other details about Danuvius

- Danuvius was smaller than today's great apes, though males were close in size to male chimpanzees and bonobos - perhaps 65 pounds (30 kg) - while females were smaller, perhaps 45 pounds (20 kg). Danuvius was just over 3 feet (1 meter) tall.
- Danuvius lived in what was then a hot climate on a flat landscape with forests and meandering rivers.

6) Indian lungs under extreme stress

Why in news?

- Indians face the **double burden** of heavy **air pollution** in addition to the **high rate of Acute Respiratory Infection** for which children are more vulnerable, according to experts.

Acute Respiratory infections:

- According to **World Health Organisation**, acute respiratory infection is a serious ailment that **prevents normal breathing function** and kills an estimated 2.6 million children annually every year worldwide.

Symptoms:

Caused by:

▪ Early symptoms	▪ Advanced symptoms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ congestion, either in the nasal sinuses or lungs ▪ runny nose ▪ cough ▪ sore throat ▪ body aches ▪ fatigue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High fever and chills ▪ difficulty breathing ▪ dizziness ▪ low blood oxygen level ▪ loss of consciousness

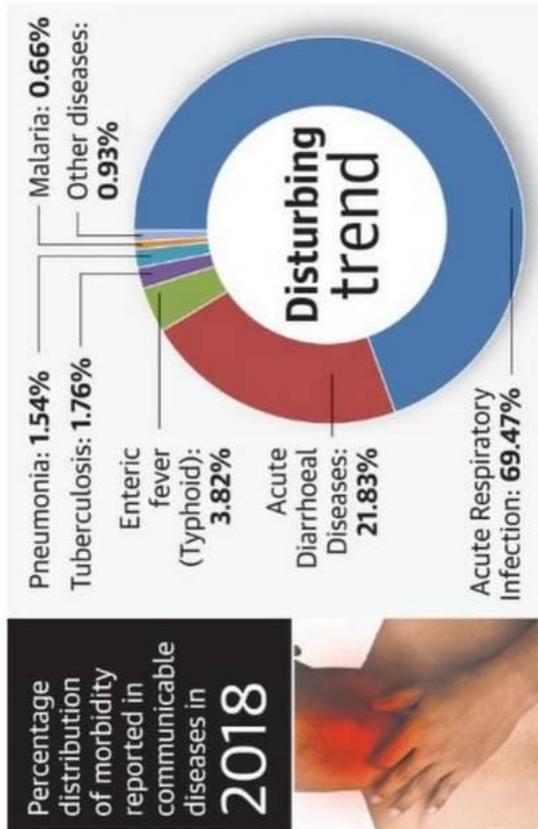
- **Adenovirus, Pneumococcus bacterium, Rhinovirus**

More susceptible among:

- **Children and Elderly**

Facts about Acute Respiratory Infection:

- Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI) accounted for approximately **69% of morbidity** last year which was the **highest in the communicable disease category** leading to approximately **27% mortality**.
- 2) Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal reported a large number of patients and fatalities due to ARI as per the **National Health Profile-2019**, which was recently released by the Union Health Ministry.
- 3) High level of air pollution would be an additional burden to the already high rate of ARI that the country is facing.



■ **Pollution induced ARI:**

- Breathe in polluted air
- ↓
- Pollutants penetrate and inflame the linings of our bronchial tubes and lungs
- ↓
- Leads to respiratory illness
- (chronic bronchitis, emphysema, heart disease, asthma, wheezing, coughing and difficulty in breathing)

■ **People at more risk:**

- **The current level of air pollution poses a high risk to pregnant women and the baby.**
- **Consequence:**

- The foetus receives oxygen from the mother, and if she is breathing polluted air, it can increase the **health risk of unborn babies.**
- Pregnant women in the **first trimester** need to be more careful as risk increases and pollution can cause a medical condition called **intrauterine inflammation.**
- Prenatal exposure to pollutants increases risk of **pre-term delivery and low birth weight**, factors that can lead to developmental disabilities later on.
- **Children are particularly susceptible** as they breathe through their mouths, bypassing the filtering effects of the nasal passages and allowing pollutants to travel deeper into the lungs.
- For details about National Health Profile - 2019 refer pulse 21 polity section.

■ **Do you Know?**

■ **Morbidity Vs Mortality**

- Morbidity refers to the **unhealthy state** of an individual, while mortality refers to the **state of being mortal.**
- Both concepts can be applied at the individual level or across a population.
- Morbidity rate looks at the **incidence of a disease** across a population and/or geographic location during a single year.
- Mortality rate is the **rate of death** in a population.
- The two are often used together to calculate the prevalence of a disease — e.g., measles — and how likely that disease is to be deadly, particularly for certain demographics.

PIB ANALYSIS

1) Foundation Stone for the ASRB Building:-

About ASRB:

- The Agricultural Scientists Recruitment Board – It is an independent recruiting agency for the ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research). It was not a Government organization but a registered Society under the Societies Registration Act 1860.
- Recently, it delinked from the ICAR and attached it with the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers welfare.
- For the purpose of autonomy, secrecy, accountability and efficient functioning, the cabinet has approved it.
- The revamped Board comprises a Chairman, three members and a Secretary and its major function is to conduct ARS/ NET Examinations.

About ICAR:

- Indian Council of Agricultural Research is an autonomous organization under the Department of Agriculture and Education, Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Headquarters at New Delhi.
- It is an apex body for coordinating, guiding and managing research and education in Agriculture including horticulture, fisheries and animal sciences in the entire country. It has an important role in Green revolution and subsequent development in Agriculture.

▪ Mandate of ICAR

- Plan, Undertake, Coordinate and Promote Research and Technology Development for Sustainable Agriculture.
- Aid, Impart and Coordinate Agricultural Education to enable Quality Human Resource Development.
- Frontline Extension for technology application, adoption, knowledge management and capacity development for agri-based rural development.
- Policy, Cooperation and Consultancy in Agricultural Research, Education &

Extension.

Why in News?

- ASRB has given an autonomous status and has been delinked from the ICAR.

2) Kung Fu Nuns of the Drukpa Order- Heroic human rights activism.

About Kung Fu Nuns:



- The Kung Fu Nuns are the fearless daughters of India who represent a new generation of Buddhists using spirituality to inspire real-life action & impact.
- They are a strong community of 700 nuns and growing, with a thousand-year-old Drukpa legacy.
- Kung Fu Nuns represent a new generation of Buddhists who use their teachings to take real action and effect meaningful change in the world by promoting gender equality and environmentalism.
- Harnessing the ancient martial art to build strength, promote equality, and improve communities, they are inspiring young girls to break stereotypes and be their own heroes.
- They belong to the Drukpa Lineage, a thousand-year-old Buddhist tradition that began in the Himalayas.

About Asia Game Changer Awards:

- Founded in 1956, the Asia Society is a nonpartisan, non-profit educational institution.
- The society is dedicated to promoting mutual understanding and strengthening

partnerships among people, leaders and institutions of Asia and the United States in a global context.

- Each year, the Asia Society honor **individuals, organizations, or movements that have inspired, enlightened, and shown true leadership** in areas that reflect Asia Society's core pillars of policy and business, arts and culture, and education.
- This year's Game Changer Awards along with its founding partner, Citigroup is **honouring women who are applying their unique vision and talent to make the world a better place.**

Why in News?

- The Kung Fu Nuns of the Drukpa Order, recently received the Asia Society's prestigious Game Changer Award in New York on 30th October 2019 for their path-breaking work to empower women and dismantle gender stereotypes in the Himalayas.
- Union Minister of State for Tourism and Culture (IC) Shri Prahlad Singh Patel impressed with their tagline '**BE YOUR OWN HERO**' as the slogan is motivating and inspirational. The Nuns use Jigme as their first name and the meaning of Jigme is 'fearless'.

3) ICEDASH and ATITHI

About ICEDASH:

- ICEDASH is an Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) monitoring dashboard of the Indian Customs which helps the public see the daily Customs clearance times of cargo at various ports and airports.
- It will help the businesses in comparing clearance times across ports and thus plan their logistics accordingly.
- It has been developed in collaboration with the National Informatics Centre (NIC).

About ATITHI:

- ATITHI is an easy to use mobile app for international travelers to file the Customs declaration in advance.
- Passengers can use the app to file declaration of dutiable items and currency with the Indian Customs even before boarding the flight to India.
- It would encourage tourism and business travel to India.

Why in News?

- Union Minister of Finance and Corporate Affairs, S unveiled two new IT initiatives – ICEDASH and ATITHI – for improved monitoring and pace of Customs clearance of imported goods and facilitating arriving international passengers by electronic filing of Customs baggage and currency declarations.

4) SCOJtEx

About SCOJtEX:

- Shanghai Cooperation Organization Joint Exercise on Urban Earthquake Search & Rescue is inaugurated by Union Minister of Home Affairs.
- It was the outcome of the 9th meeting of the Heads of Government Department of SCO countries dealing with Emergency situations.
- This lead to that India attaches special importance to SCO as an excellent platform for synergizing the efforts of all member State in the field of multilateral, political, security, economic and people-to-people interaction in the region.

About SCO:

- Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a Eurasian political, economic and military organization. Initially it was started with 5 countries- China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan founding member of SCO.
- Its aim is to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region.
- Member Countries- China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, India, Pakistan and Tajikistan.
- Observer States- Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, Mongolia
- Dialogue Partners- Armenia, Azerbaijan, Cambodia, Nepal, Srilanka and Turkey.

Why in News?

- Recently, Shri Amit Shah inaugurates the SCO Joint Exercise on Urban Earthquake Search & Rescue in New Delhi.

5) ShaalaDarpan

About ShaalaDarpan:

- It is portal, an E-Governance school automation and management system for Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti.
- This is Single integrated platform; it has been developed for information sharing and knowledge dissemination for the

employees and students of Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti.

Why in News?

- Ministry of Human Resource Development has launched ShaalaDarpan portal to bring transparency in NavodayaVidyalayas.

6) Khadi gets separate unique HS code:

What is HS Code?

- HS Code stands for Harmonized System and it is a six digit identification code. It was developed by the WCO- World Customs Organization.

About World Customs Organization:

- Since 1971 India is been member of WCO, it is a part of the Asia Pacific region having 33 countries, one of the 6 regions.
- Headquartered in Brussels, Belgium and it plays a leading role in discussion, development, promotion and implementation of modern customs systems and procedures.
- Mission: It is an independent intergovernmental body, to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administration.
- WCO is responsible for administering the World Trade Organization Agreement on Customs Valuation.
- The Members of WCO has been offered with a range of Conventions and other international instruments, as well as technical assistance and training services.
- The efforts of WCO to combat fraudulent activities are also recognized internationally.

Why in News?

- Recently, Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises has given a separate unique HS code to Khadi, so that the export of Khadi will be increased.

6) BIMSTEC Ports Conclave:

About BIMSTEC:

- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is an international organization.
- Members: Comprises of South Asia and Southeast Asia

1) Bangladesh

B

- 2) Bhutan B
- 3) India I
- 4) Nepal N
- 5) Sri Lanka S
- 6) Myanmar M
- 7) Thailand T

- The alliance was to harness trade and accelerated growth with mutual cooperation in different areas of common interest by utilizing the regional resources and geographical advantage.
- It aims to create an enabling environment for rapid economic development; accelerate social progress; and promote collaboration on matters of common interest in the region. BIMSTEC helps to increase the socio economic growth of the member countries.

About BIMSTEC Ports Conclave:

- The Ports' First Conclave of BIMSTEC nations are expected to explore the possibility of increasing economic cooperation by furthering EXIM trade and coastal shipping.
- It is a platform to discuss on various investment opportunities and to bring productivity and safety at ports.
- 1st session will be discussed on "**Port led Industrial and Tourism Development**"- this is to encourage tourism between the BIMSTEC Countries.
- 2nd session will be discussed on "**Emergent Roles of Port in the Global supply Chain**"
- Last session will be discussed on "**Safe and Secure Ports**" – this is to discuss the emerging threats.
- On the second day the session on 'Ports Services: Delivering Value' will provide a platform for discussion on various steps undertaken for improving the ease of doing business.
- The session on Green Port Operations aims to discuss the process, the technologies and solutions available to adopt 'Green Port Operations'.

Why Bay of Bengal?

- Bay of Bengal is the largest bay in the world.
- One-fifth of the world's population lives in the seven countries around it, with a combined GDP of \$2.7 trillion.
- One fourth of trade cross the Bay of Bengal every year.

Why in News?

- Ministry of State for Shipping, Shri Mansukh Mandaviya inaugurated 1st ever “BIMSTEC Ports Conclave” at Visakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh.

7) FSDC 21st Meeting:

About FSDC:

- Financial Stability and Development Council was constituted in Dec 2010.
- Members: Heads of the financial sector regulatory authorities (i.e., RBI, SEBI, IRDA, and PFRDA), Finance Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs (Union Finance Ministry), Secretary, Department of Financial Services, and Chief Economic Adviser.
- Objectives: FSDC is an apex level body, it was set up to strengthen and institutionalize the mechanism for maintaining financial stability, enhancing inter-regulatory coordination and promoting financial sector development.
- The reconstitution would make FSDC to incorporate changes in the economic regulatory framework of the country.

About the Meeting:

- The Council reviewed the current global and domestic macroeconomic situation and financial stability and vulnerabilities issues, including inter-alia, those concerning NBFCs and Credit Rating Agencies.
- The discussions were done on the proposals submitted for further strengthening of the resolution framework and framework for cyber security of the financial sector.
- The Council also took note of the activities undertaken by the FSDC Sub-Committee chaired by the Governor, RBI and the initiatives taken by the various regulators in the financial sector.

Why in News?

- The 21st Meeting of the Financial Stability and Development Council was held under the chairmanship of the Union Minister

for Finance & Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman to review the current global and domestic macro- economic situation and financial stability and other issues.

8) DIN System of CBIC to come into force:

What is DIN?

- **Documentation Identification Number** is a unique number allotted by the Central Government to any person intending to be a Director or an existing director of a company.
- It is an **8-digit unique identification number** which has a lifetime validity through which details of directors are maintained in a database.
- **Use of DIN:** Whenever a return, an application or any information related to a company will be submitted under any law, the director signing such return, application or information will mention his DIN underneath his signature.

What is CBIC?

- The Central Board of Indirect Taxes is the nodal national agency responsible for administering Customs, GST, Central Excise, Service Tax and Narcotics in India.

About the Force:

- The DIN system in indirect taxes is to further the Government's objectives of bringing transparency and accountability in the indirect tax administration also through widespread use of information technology.
- In indirect taxes, the DIN would be used for search authorization, summons, arrest memo, inspection notices and letters issued in the course of any enquiry.
- From now on, any communication from GST or Custom or Central Excise department without a computer generated DIN, would be treated as invalid and shall be non-est in law or deemed to be as if it has never been issued.”
- No communication would be issued without DIN except only if it is in the specified exceptional circumstances.
- This measure would create a digital directory for maintaining a proper audit trail of such communications.

- CBIC has specified that any communication issued manually under exceptional circumstances would have to be regularized on the system within 15 working days of its issuance.

Why in News?

- Recently, the Ministry of Finance has introduced Documentation Identification Number System to Central Board of Indirect Taxes.

9) Shilpotsav - 2019

About the Fair:

- Shilpotsav- 2019 is the annual fair of artisans from across the country, belonging to the weaker sections of the society, which began on 1st November and will continue till 15th November 2019.
- On interaction with the artisans the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is working towards empowering disadvantaged and marginalised artisans nationwide and shilpotsav is to be conducted every year.
- The artisans assisted by the Apex corporations of the Ministry Social Justice and Empowerment i.e. National Backward Classes Finance & Development Corporation (NBCFDC), National Scheduled Caste Finance & Development Corporation (NSFDC), National Handicapped Finance & Development Corporation (NHFDC), National Safai Karamchari Finance & Development Corporation (NSKFDC) and National Trust are displaying and selling their products.
- The range of products in this fair include - silk sarees, durries, readymade garments, Terracotta products, Jute Products, dress materials, Kashmiri shawls/stoles, leather, cane & bamboo products, hand embroidery, bead products, pearls, imitation jewellery, lakh products, decorative candles, wood carving, block printing, wooden toys, tie & dye, wood, marble artefacts and handloom etc.

About NBCFDC:

- National Backward Classes Finance & Development Corporation (NBCFDC) was incorporated 13 January 1992 as a nonprofit company, to improve and develop the economic activities for the

members of Backward Classes who are living below double the poverty line.

- The Corporation can assist loan for their self-employment ventures in the sectors like agriculture, transport and service etc.

About NSFDC:

- National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC) was set up in 1989 as a nonprofit company, for financing, facilitating and mobilising funds for the economic empowerment of persons belonging to the scheduled caste families living below Double the Poverty Line.

About NHFDC:

- National Handicapped Finance and Development Corporation (NHFDC) was set up in January 1997 as a nonprofit company.
- The corporation provides financial assistance for a wide range of income generating activities to disabled persons.

About NSKFDC:

- National Safai Karamchari Finance & Development Corporation is implementing was set up in January 1997 as a nonprofit company.
- NSKFDC empower the Scavengers, Safai Karamcharis and their dependents to break away from their traditional occupation, depressed social conditions and poverty and leverage them to work their own way up the social and economic ladder with dignity and pride.

Why in News?

- Shilpostav- 2019 is the annual fair of artisans from across the country, belonging to the weaker sections of the society, is being held in New Delhi.

10) MILAN 2020

About MILAN:

- Milan is a multilateral naval exercise hosted by Indian Navy under Andaman and Nicobar Command.
- Milan was commenced in 1995 at Andaman and Nicobar Command until last year, is being conducted for the first time on the mainland at ENC with increased scope and complexity of the Exercise.

Aim of Milan 2020:

- MILAN 2020 is aimed to enhance professional interaction between friendly foreign navies and learn from each other's strengths and best practices in the maritime domain.

About the Milan 2020 Conference:

- The Mid Planning Conference (MPC) for MILAN exercise concluded at HQENC Visakhapatnam 08 Nov 19.
- It was a three day conference attended by 29 delegates from 17 foreign navies.
- The scope of exercise planned during the harbour and sea phase of MILAN 2020

was discussed in detail with the delegates of the participating countries during the conference.

- The event would also provide an excellent opportunity for Operational Commanders of friendly foreign navies to interact with each other in areas of mutual interest.

Why in News?

- Recently, the Ministry of Defence conducted the Mid Planning Conference for MILAN Exercise, 3-day conference was attended by 29 delegates from 17 friendly foreign Navies.

News in Depth

AIR NEWS

1) High Energy Materials Research Laboratory (HEMRL)

About HEMRL

- HEMRL is a premier laboratory of DRDO and primarily engages in developing Rocket and Gun Propellants, Pyrotechnic Devices, High Explosive Systems and synthesis of high energy molecules.
- HEMRL has created a state of the art facility for design, processing and evaluation of ignition systems. The facility consists of process, assembly & storage buildings and a design centre.
- Ignition is a crucial and highly critical phenomenon in the ignition chain of Rocket motor.
- Ignition system for Agni, Prithvi, Akash, Nag, Pinaka, Long Range Surface-to-Air Missile (LRSAM), etc. have been designed and developed in HEMRL.

About DRDO

- DRDO is the R&D wing of Ministry of Defence, Govt of India, with a vision to empower India with cutting-edge defence technologies and a mission to achieve self-reliance in critical defence technologies and systems, while equipping our armed forces with state-of-the-art weapon systems and equipment in accordance with the requirements lay down by the three Services.

Why in News?

- Raksha Rajya Mantri Shripad Naik inaugurated the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) Igniter Complex at High Energy Materials Research Laboratory (HEMRL) in Pune.

2) IISF 2019: The 5th India International Science Festival

About IISF

- **International Science Festival** was started from the year 2015.
- It is the **largest science festival in the world**. It is an annual festival to celebrate the achievements of India's scientific and technological advancements with students, innovators, craftsmen, farmers, scientists and technocrats from India and abroad.
- It is organized by the Ministry of Science & Technology, Ministry of Earth Sciences and Vijnana Bharati (Vibha).
- This year's theme is **RISEN India - Research, Innovation and Science Empowering the Nation**

About IISF 2019

- In the first day of the IISF over 1,598 students had created a Guinness World Record for the **largest astrophysics lesson and assembly of spectrosopes**.

- Astronomers use spectrosopes to know details like temperature, chemical composition, etc. of celestial objects hundreds or millions of light years away from us.
- A small personal model of advanced spectrosopes can easily be made by anyone using a box made of cardboard that has a very narrow window used to channel light into the spectroscope.

- On the second day of IISF, the largest electronics lesson and assembly of optical media communication units at a single location will be attempted with the participation of over 1,000 students.
- Communication link set up through Infrared signals - Wireless infrared communications refers to the use of free-space propagation of light waves in the near infrared band as a transmission medium for communication. This attempt

is dedicated to Chandrasekhara Venkata Raman and Satyendra Nath Bose

Why in News?

- The 5th edition of India International Science Festival (IISF) 2019 will be held at Kolkata from 5th to 8th November, 2019 with the theme RISEN India – Research, Innovation, and Science Empowering the Nation.

3) Cyclone Bulbul

About:

- Cyclonic Storm Bulbul is an active tropical cyclone that struck the Indian state of West Bengal at Category 2 hurricane-equivalent intensity and is currently a flood and storm surge threat to Bangladesh.
- Originating from the remnants of Severe Tropical Storm Matmo over the southern Bay of Bengal in early November, Bulbul slowly intensified into a Very Severe Cyclonic Storm.
- The Cyclonic storm Bulbul caused havoc at Bakkhali, Sagar, Namkhana, Kakdwip in South 24 Parganas Digha, Tamluk, Kanthi, Ramnagar in East Midnapur Districts besides other places. Standing Crops in vast areas have been damaged.
- It is only the fourth tropical cyclone ever recorded to regenerate over the Andaman Sea, having crossed Southeast Asia overland. In addition, it is only the second to make it to hurricane strength, the last being in 1960.

What are Tropical cyclones?

- Tropical cyclones are violent storms that originate over oceans in **tropical areas** and move over to the coastal areas bringing about large scale destruction due to violent winds (squalls), very heavy rainfall (torrential rainfall) and **storm surge**.

Categories of Cyclones

- **Category 1:** Wind speed of 90-125 kph, negligible house damage, some damage to trees and crops.
- **Category 2:** Destructive winds of 125-164 kph. Minor house damage, significant

damage to trees, crops and caravans, risk of power failure.

- **Category 3:** Very destructive winds of 165-224 kph. Some roof and structural damage, some caravans destroyed power failure likely.
- **Category 4:** Very destructive winds of 225-279 kph. Significant roofing loss and structural damage, caravans destroyed, blown away, widespread power failures.
- **Category 5:** Very destructive winds gusts of more than 280 kph. Extremely dangerous with widespread destruction.

Why in News?

- Cyclone Bulbul has intensified into a severe cyclonic storm causing heavy rain in the coastal districts of Odisha and West Bengal.

4) Apps by Indian Railways

News in Detail:

- The applications, namely CRS Sanction Management System, Rail-road crossing GAD approval system and TMS for construction aim at beefing up IT-enabled services.
- **CRS Sanction Management System:** The CRS Sanction Management System is an important aspect in construction, maintenance and up-gradation of railway assets.
- **Rail-road crossing GAD approval system:** Rail-road crossing GAD approval system will expedite preparation, processing and approval of general agreement drawings related to the construction of Road Over Bridges and Road under Bridges.
- **TMS for construction:** Application TMS for construction has been developed for new assets being constructed by the construction organization.

Why in News?

- Indian Railways has launched three applications for all-India roll out to strengthen its IT-enabled services which will help ensure proper monitoring of projects being undertaken by Railways.

Hindu Editorial Analysis

1) Enhancing insurance coverage for bank deposits.

Context:

- With a series of issues the bank faces, **Deposit insurance under Deposit Insurance Credit Guarantee Corporation** becomes a major crisis that is brought into focus.

About DICGC

- DICGC is a **wholly owned subsidiary of RBI**.
- The functions of the DICGC are governed by the provisions of '**The Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation Act, 1961**' (DICGC Act) and '**The Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation General Regulations, 1961**' framed by the Reserve Bank of India.
- It was established for the purpose of **providing insurance of deposits** and guaranteeing of credit facilities.
- DICGC insures **all bank deposits**, such as savings, fixed, current, recurring deposits **except** the following types of deposits
 - Deposits of foreign Governments;
 - Deposits of Central/State Governments;
 - Inter-bank deposits
 - Deposits of the State Land Development Banks with the State co-operative banks;
 - Any amount due on account of and deposit received outside India
 - Any amount which has been specifically exempted by the corporation with the previous approval of the RBI.
- **Banks covered** by Deposit Insurance Scheme.
 - All commercial banks, Local Area Banks, and Regional Rural Banks.
 - Co-operative Banks
- The DICGC **insures principal and interest** upto a maximum amount of **Rs. 100,000** (since 1993) of each deposit in a bank. The DICGC Act empowers the Corporation to raise this limit with the prior approval of the Central Government.

- The premium paid by the insured banks to the Corporation is required to be absorbed by the banks themselves so that the benefit of deposit insurance protection is made available to the depositors free of cost.

What are the issues with current deposit insurance under DICGC?

- DICGC **does not cover NBFC's deposits and Primary cooperative societies**.
- Insurance cover limit of **1 lakh** does not include the majority of the accounts completely.
- Under current DICGC cover 1 lakh amount needs to be released only if bank goes for liquidation.
- DICGC charges a **flat 0.1% insurance** premium on the deposits of banks which is against the suggestion given by an RBI panel in 2015 as premium should be based on differential risk based on the lending practices of the bank.
- The **premium collected is much higher than the claims settled** so far in FY19. (In FY19, the DICGC collected ₹12000 crore as premium and settled ₹37 crore worth claims)

Suggestions to enhance insurance coverage for bank deposits:

- Compared to other BRICS nations, **India today has the lowest deposit insurance** cover to per capita income ratio, at 0.9 times.
- Denying people the right over their hard-earned money is a great hazard for the financial system, which runs on the trust of depositors.
- Hence some suggestions are to be included to prevent this hazard from happening which are as follows:

Enhancing insurance limit:

- **Insurance limit** of ₹1 lakh, set in 1993, **needs to be raised** to a higher amount, with some suggestions being made to

raise it to ₹15 lakh, which will cover 90% of the accounts completely.

Including left out depositors

- **NBFCs and Primary Cooperative societies** often serving the vulnerable sections, their depositors must **not be left out**.

Introducing additional premium

- Customers who want more coverage than the statutory cover on their deposits should be able to purchase this by paying **additional premium** which should be extended directly to banks that wish to **increase the coverage of deposits to above the statutory requirements**.

Relaxing Freezes in withdrawals

- During the period of 'Freeze in withdrawals' at least the **statutory amount should be released** which will prevent bank run in a long way which could be triggered when customers get alarmed about the ability of banks to repay their deposits.

Higher Premium for higher claiming banks

- The DICGC must draw inspiration from standard insurance practices and charge **higher premiums from banks with a past history of higher claims** so that the bank which doesn't claim at all need not pay for someone else's mistake.
- (An SBI report states that 93% of the premium collected by the DICGC in 2018-19 came from commercial banks (public sector: 75%, private sector: 18%), but over 94% of the claims settled (ever since the inception of the DICGC) have been those of cooperative banks. Clearly, poor governance in cooperative banks has been cross-subsidised by the better-performing commercial banks)

Bringing in Private insurers:

- **Bringing private sector insurers and reinsurers** into the deposit insurance segment, which could drive down premium prices can be taken into account as they can bring in **more accurate risk-based pricing** of these policies.
- If the government is serious about **formal financial inclusion**, the stated objective of flagship schemes like the **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana**, it must realise that an **immediate availability of funds**

is as important as the **insurance coverage of funds** to increase the confidence of citizens in the banking system.

- Hence, it must take **purposeful decisive steps in expanding and rectifying the deposit insurance scheme** as a safety net of the financial system.

2) Refusing to bite the bullet (on RCEP)

- (Other topics: Safe for now, On India opting out of RCEP; A Victory for the dairy sector; After RCEP opt-out, the challenge of a shape-up; The China factor in RCEP move; After RCEP reticence, need for reform recalibration)

Context:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on November 4th has finally decided to **stay away from Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** at the Leaders Summit in Bangkok.
- **About RCEP**
- RCEP is an **ASEAN-centred proposal for a regional free trade area**, which would initially include the ten ASEAN member states and those countries which have existing FTAs with **ASEAN – Australia, China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea and New Zealand**.
- It is being under negotiation since the **7th East Asia Summit in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 2012**.
- The negotiations have missed several deadlines repeatedly, even though they have gained momentum since 2016.
- In the **7th RCEP ministerial meeting** that took place in **Bangkok** on September, 2019, all members were committed to conclude the trade agreement in full by November.
- RCEP, if concluded with all 16 countries including India, would be the world's largest trade deal including **30% of global GDP** and **half of the world's population**.

Last minute withdrawal
India pulled out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) at the last minute on the ground that it would hurt farmers, businesses, workers and consumers



Who signed the pact?
The RCEP brings together the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (including India), China, Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand. Except India, everyone else is ready to sign it

Why is India worried?
The deal requires the gradual elimination of tariffs which may flood Indian markets with Chinese goods and agricultural produce from Oceania, harming local producers

Will India's decision hurt the RCEP?
Without India, the RCEP accounts for nearly 1/3 of the global GDP. But they have less than a third of the

Can India join later?
Yes, if the issues it has with the

Why RCEP may be beneficial to India?

- Beyond concerns, India has enormous **strategic and long-term economic imperatives** to join the RCEP.
- If India wanted to stimulate its latent manufacturing expertise and overcome its steep development challenges, India desperately needs to sign-on to both an **export-oriented growth model** and a **regional integration strategy**, the gateway for which is provided by RCEP.

1) Export oriented growth model:

- As no industrialising economy showed growth rate more than 7% without a sharp and sustained growth in manufactured goods export, it is imperative for a country like India to act in concert with both investment and export which would become key foundation of India's growth.
- RCEP furnishes a concerted **liberalisation framework** which, if paired with domestic factor market reforms, could have propelled the country towards its '**Make in India**' targets.

2) Regional Implications:

- India does not participate in the **Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum**, where best practices in trade and digital economy endeavours are formulated.
- It is not a member of the **Chiang Mai Initiative**, which has evolved from a currency swap arrangement into an

embryonic form of Asian financial regionalism.

- It was excluded from the **Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership negotiations**, and is only marginally attached to the region by way of shallow economic partnership agreements with Japan, South Korea and the ASEAN countries.
- Without an economic integration strategy in Asia, India will have **no strategy** in Asia and even the sum total of its 'Act East' policy will amount to little.
- RCEP afforded an opportunity for New Delhi to become the global epicentre of 'open regionalism' when protectionism and populism were turning heads up.
- By signing on to RCEP and instituting structural reforms at home, there lies an opportunity to integrate India within **Asian trade regionalism**.

India's concerns in joining RCEP

- In defending India's withdrawal from the RCEP, the government has articulated **three key concerns**.
- **Negative impact of joining the agreement in key constituencies of India**

Dairy sector

- The tariff clauses for agriculture in the RCEP are much more severe compared to the existing World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement.
- While the WTO allows a country to fix tariffs up to a certain maximum, or bound tariff, for a given commodity line, the **RCEP binds countries to reduce that level to zero** within the next 15 years.
- **New Zealand milk producers** are also more efficient than India's small producers, which would have given the former a **price advantage in India's market** — if the market for dairy products was opened under India's RCEP commitments.
- (New Zealand is the second largest exporter of milk and milk products, and this group of products has contributed between a third and a fourth of the country's total exports in recent years.)

Agriculture

- In World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreements and in the FTAs with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

(ASEAN), Korea and Japan, most of the major agricultural products were excluded from import tariff cuts but by joining RCEP the **adverse effects of import liberalisation renders the agriculture sector more vulnerable.**

- **Australia** having large export interests in wheat and sugar, two of the most sensitive commodities for India, reduces the competitiveness of Indian agricultural products.
- **Lack of concessions within the final agreement on key demands for India**

Key demands of India from RCEP:

- India's demands at the RCEP negotiations included
- **shifting the base year** for tariff cuts from 2014 to 2019;
- avoiding a sudden surge in imports from China by including a large number of items in an **auto-trigger mechanism**;
- calling for **stricter rules of origin** to prevent dumping from China; and
- a **better deal in services.**

Guiding Principles and Objectives for Negotiating RCEP:

The de facto negotiating mandate

- "RCEP will aim at progressively **eliminating tariff and non-tariff barriers** on substantially all trade" and that tariff "negotiations should aim to achieve the high level of **tariff liberalization**".

Rules of Origin

- Rules of origin are the criteria used to **determine the national source of a product** which **prevent countries from routing**, through other countries, products on which India would maintain higher tariffs. This demand was not accepted by other RCEP nations.

Base rate

- Long standing request of India that the **base rate of Customs duty be changed**

from 2014 to 2019, as the RCEP, even if signed in 2019, would be ratified only by 2022, which means that the 2014 base rate would be hugely outdated even for the take-off point of the agreement was not paid attention.

Tariff reduction:

- The RCEP deal format required **India to abolish tariffs** on more than 70% of goods from China, Australia and New Zealand, and nearly 90% goods from Japan, South Korea and Asean which would have resulted in cheaper imports to India. But India was not convinced with this and asked for **country specific tariff schedule** in earlier negotiations which was not accepted and later asked for auto trigger mechanism.

Auto trigger mechanism

- In order to check rise in imports, India asked for auto trigger mechanism in which India is allowed to **raise tariffs on products in instances where imports cross a certain threshold.** However, most of the countries in RCEP is against this proposal.

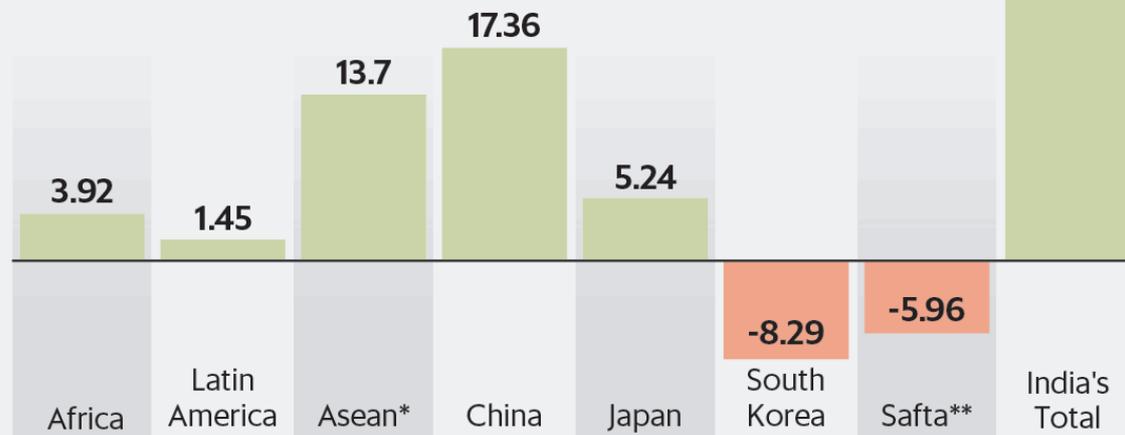
Exclusion of Most favoured Nation

- India is concerned about the Most Favoured Nation status which it gives to its strategic allies to be handed out to all RCEP nations including those with whom India has border disputes.
- **India's trade deficit getting expanded under RCEP**
- According to a paper published by NITI Aayog, India has a **bilateral trade deficit with most of the member countries of RCEP.** India fears that the registered **trade deficit** with 11 out of 15 RCEP participating Countries in 2018-2019 would increase if India Joins RCEP.
- India's trade deficit with RCEP countries stood at \$105 billion, out of which China alone accounted for \$52 billion.

A widening gap

India is running a trade deficit with most of its trading partners.

India's merchandise trade deficit (Change from 2014 to 2019 in \$ billion)



*Association of South-East Asian Nations; **South Asian Free Trade Area

Source: SBI Research

- India's prior Preferential trade agreement with East Asian countries resulted in **overall export growth which was overshadowed by larger rise in manufactured goods imports**, displaced many vulnerable domestic Producers which may likely happen again if India joins RCEP
- More importantly, while exports to RCEP countries account for just 15% of India's total exports, imports from RCEP countries make up 35% of the country's total imports.

Other concerns:

China factor:

- India since signed FTAs with all the countries of RCEP except China is the major concern for India, as after signing RCEP cheaper products from China would have flooded the Indian market.
- Without** the politically challenging **reform of India's factor markets**, which would enable its small and medium enterprises to profitably slot themselves within East Asia's vibrant value chains, the likelihood of **displacement** and **steep unemployment** is high.
- India didn't get any credible assurance on market access and non-tariff barriers.

- E commerce and trade remedies** were among other key areas of concern that failed to find satisfactory redressal.

Implications of India's exit of RCEP:

- India may **lose market access to Asian economies at preferential rates**, but its **vulnerable domestic industries** would be **protected** from intense competition and more importantly, Chinese dumping
- The decision not to join RCEP will boost **'Make in India' initiative**.
- Refraining from RCEP will **protect the dairy and agriculture industry** particularly from cheaper imports.
- India, being a part of neither RCEP nor Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) — which will effectively determine **global value chains for manufacturing in Asia**, will continue to remain unintegrated in such supply chains, and will see its ambitions of becoming a global manufacturing hub further delayed.
- To become a global hub for manufacturing, integration into global value chains is needed the most.
- Jobs linked to global value chains earn one-third more than those jobs focused on the domestic market.

- (The World Bank found that when coupled with domestic reforms, joining such global value chains can “boost growth, create better jobs, and reduce poverty”)
- The inability to accede to the RCEP and ensure India’s integration into these emerging global value chains means India will lose out on a key opportunity to create such high-quality, high-paying jobs.
- India’s absence in both of Asia’s two key economic architectures will **take away from India’s goals as a regional and Indo-Pacific power**, as well as a prospective global power.



Way forward:

- The smart way to handle these implications is to **initiate reforms on the export front**, bring down costs in the economy and, simultaneously, **increase efficiencies**.
- India cannot miss out on being a part of global supply chains and this can happen only if **tariff barriers are reduced**. And the best way to balance the effect of rising imports is by promoting exports.

- The government must focus on the mechanisms through which India can create **globally competitive sectors** that can demand market access in India’s partner countries.

3) An unwanted booster dose for vaccine hesitancy

What is vaccine hesitancy?

- Vaccine hesitancy is defined as a “**reluctance or refusal to vaccinate** despite the availability of vaccines”.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) listed “vaccine hesitancy” as among the top 10 threats to global health this year-2019

Global health threats by WHO

- The World Health Organization has released a list of 10 threats to global health in 2019. They include:
 - Air pollution and climate change
 - Non-communicable diseases
 - Threat of a global influenza pandemic
 - Fragile and vulnerable settings, such as regions affected by drought and conflict
 - Antimicrobial resistance
 - Ebola and high-threat pathogens
 - Weak primary care
 - Vaccine hesitancy
 - Dengue
 - HIV

Instances of Vaccine hesitancy:

- Five times **low uptake of oral polio vaccine** in the early 2000s among poor Muslim communities in Uttar Pradesh.
- **Low uptake of the measles-rubella vaccine** when it was introduced in 2017 in even states like Tamilnadu and Karnataka which have traditionally seen high vaccine acceptance.
- As recently as 2016, Muslim communities in two districts in north Kerala reported low uptake of **diphtheria vaccine**.

Reasons for vaccine hesitancy:

- **Religious reasons**
 - Religious propaganda that the vaccine may contain **microbes, chemicals and animal-derived products which is forbidden by Islamic law**.
- **Misconceptions due to media**
 - Social media stirs fear in people by **falsely blaming vaccines for unrelated diseases** and by highlighting the adverse

effects from vaccination which prevents people from taking up vaccines.

- Recently some people refraining from taking up oral polio vaccine is because of the **misconception** that it may cause illness, infertility and was ineffective.
- **Vaccine derived diseases**
- Oral Polio vaccine contains attenuated (weakened) vaccine-virus, **activating an immune response** in the body. This when excreted can spread to immediate community and when allowed to survive for more time, it undergoes genetic changes resulting in formation of circulating vaccine derived Polio virus.
- This fear of acquiring polio due to oral polio vaccine is also a reason for vaccine hesitancy.

Benefits of Vaccination:

- According to WHO, vaccination **prevents between two-three million deaths each year**, a figure that will rise by another 1.5 million if vaccine coverage improves.
- Vaccination **protects children from serious illness and complications of vaccine-preventable diseases**
- Vaccines have reduced and, in some cases, **eliminated many diseases** that killed or severely disabled people just a few generations ago. For example, smallpox vaccination eradicated that disease worldwide.
- The risks of natural infection outweigh the risks of immunization for every recommended vaccine.
- Vaccination offers the **best defence against the flu** and its potentially serious consequences reduces flu illnesses, hospitalisations and even deaths.
- A study in 2017 that looked at flu seasons between 2010 and 2014 found that vaccination reduced flu-associated deaths by 65% among healthy children.

4) Fusing traditional medicine with the modern:

- The traditional Indian system of medicine, which comprises of **Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy (AYUSH)**, is a **perennially neglected alternative medicine sector**. It played an important role against the imperialistic British reign by the cultural

nationalistic reassertion but is losing its significance in modern times.

- This article deals about the challenges in integrating modern and traditional medicine and suggestions to carry forward the same.

Challenges in integration:

- Historically, attempts at integration have been foiled by parties from both within and outside the AYUSH sector.
- AYUSH lobby feared a **loss of identity** following such integration, the allopathic lobby alleged that standards of medical care would be diluted.
- The **isolationist approach** goes against the cherished ideal of modern medicine to embrace concepts that are backed by evidence while in case of traditional medicine, an isolationist attitude could deter scientific scrutiny and block some potential value addition.
- Fraught with multiple issues — including
- quackery by AYUSH practitioners;
- ridicule of AYUSH treatments and procedures by many; and
- mindless cosmeticisation and export promotion of AYUSH products.
- sharp **status gap between modern medicine and AYUSH** that is highly detrimental for the optimal deployment of AYUSH resources.

Measures to be taken for integrating AYUSH:

- Strategy for **facilitating meaningful cross-learning and collaboration** between the modern and traditional systems on equal terms.
- India could envision the **integration of education, research, and practice of both systems at all levels** which includes training of AYUSH practitioners in modern medicine through curriculum changes and vice versa.
- However, this would entail **substantial groundwork** with respect to the prerequisites of such integration: namely,
- building a strong traditional medicine evidence corpus;
- delineating the relative strengths, weaknesses, and role of each system;
- negotiating the philosophical and conceptual divergences between systems;

- standardising and regulating AYUSH practices and qualifications; and
- addressing the unique issues associated with research into AYUSH techniques.
- India can **learn from Chinese** who integrated traditional Chinese medicine with western medicine.

Initiatives to promote AYUSH:

- Creating **AYUSH wings** in defence and railway hospitals;
- Giving **soft loans and subsidies** for the establishment of private AYUSH hospitals and clinics; and
- Building **institutes of excellence** in teaching and research in AYUSH.

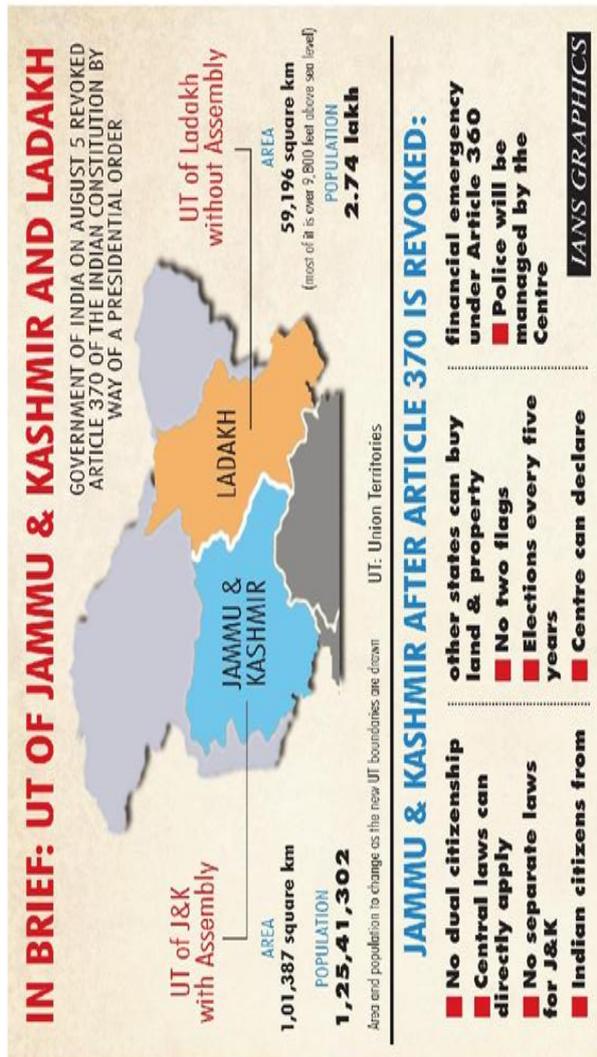
- Under the Ayushman Bharat mission, 12,500 dedicated AYUSH health and wellness centres are planned to be set up **AYUSH's relationship with modern medicine:**

Way forward:

- An **integrated framework** should create a middle path — fusing both while still permitting the two system's autonomous growth.
- A **medium- and long-term plan** for seamless integration should be developed in view of the massive drive for **achieving universal health care** which is already under its way.

RSTV Big Picture

1) J&K and Ladakh - Road ahead.



Why in news?

- Three months after the bold decision of scrapping Jammu and Kashmir's decades-old special status under **Article 370**, the **strife-torn state ceased to exist on 30th October midnight** when the clock struck 12.
- India now has two new Union Territories - Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh - while it has one less state.**

What is the background?

- The big change of status for Jammu and Kashmir comes 86 days after the Centre moved to scrap the special status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

- The new Union Territories will be headed by **Lieutenant Governors GC Murmu and RK Mathur**, respectively.
- This is for the **first time in the history of India that a state is being converted into two Union Territories.**
- The total number of **states in the country will now be 28, while the total UTs will go up to nine.**
- The UT of Jammu and Kashmir will have a legislature like Puducherry while Ladakh will be a UT without legislature like Chandigarh.

What is the History behind?

- Article 370 and 35A** of Indian Constitution gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir as it was not fully integrated with the Indian Union and had a separate constitution.
- The special status of Jammu and Kashmir was abrogated on 25th August 2019 by bringing amendments to Article 370 through Presidential Order, 2019.
- The state was bifurcated into two **Union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.**
- Jammu and Kashmir will have a legislature while Ladakh will not be with legislature as per Reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir Act, 2019.

What are the actual changes on ground after bifurcation?

- Both the UTs shall be ruled by the President of India who under the **Article 239** is authorised to administer the UTs through a designated officer appointed by him.
- These designated officers are called **Lieutenant Governors** who will be administering the newly created UTs.
- The Constitution of Jammu and Kashmir and the **Ranbir Penal Code** which was followed are done away.
- Jammu and Kashmir will have a legislative assembly with strength of 107 members with 24 seats reserved for POK.**
- The Union Territory of Ladakh will be directly administered by the Centre as it is

near the **Indo-China border** which poses security challenges to be directly handled by the Centre.

- The **state symbols like the state flag and emblem** of J&K which J&K used till now under the provisions of Article 370 will cease to exist.
- Till now the Government buildings and Vehicles of officials bore both the national and J&K flag which will now cease to exist and only the **Tricolour flag** will be used henceforth.
- The **Bicameral legislature of J&K will be replaced by a Unicameral** one and it will have not more than **nine ministers and a chief minister**.
- The Chief Minister of J&K will not have authority in **three key areas i.e, law and order, transfers and appointments and the newly created Anti-Corruption Bureau**.
- The Lt Governor will be in charge of the law and order, transfers and appointments and the newly created **Anti-Corruption Bureau**.
- There shall be new appointments made from the **AGMUT Cadre** and the existing state cadre of **Kashmir Administrative Services (KAS) and Kashmir Police Service (KPS)** will remain unchanged.
- The state government officials would be given a choice to choose either of the UTs.

What are the implications?

- The people of Ladakh will be the biggest beneficiaries as the peace loving people of Ladakh remain unaffected by the **violence and insurgency in Kashmir valley** since the last three decades. This will also solve the problems of the people of Ladakh to not depend on Srinagar for administrative solutions for their problems. Also the **distinct culture of Ladakh** can remain unaffected.
- Another set of beneficiaries are the **refugee community which comprises of people from West Pakistan, Walmikis** and others who had voting rights for Parliamentary elections but not the state elections will now be given voting rights for both.
- The **centre has with it the Law and order transferring the land in charge to the legislative assembly of J&K** so that the fear of the people that the centre

is mainly interested in the territorial aspect will wash out and focus on its development as per the interests of the local people.

- The major implication is on the **fear psychosis on the people of J&K and Ladakh** who had made Article 370 their whole soul of existence will now realise that they can live without the Article too.

What are the challenges posed to the newly elected and the newly appointed Lt Governors of J&K and Ladakh?

- With violence being prevalent in the valley, the top most agenda is to maintain **law and order and create a peaceful atmosphere**.
- **Developmental activities** like Education, Transportation, Tourism and employment needs urgent attention.
- **Delimitation of constituencies and elections** should be done in a short span to gain people's confidence.
- **Rehabilitation of Kashmir Pandits, the refugees** should be given importance.

Conclusion

- Though the newly created UTs will pose a big bundle of tasks and challenges but **Politics should take a backseat and development should become the main mantra** keeping in particular the strategic importance of the region and also the interests of local population. The perception in the minds of the locals about the **abolition of Article 370** should change and learn that it was the key in turning their lives green in a longer run.

2) Indo-German Economic Ties

Why in news?

- India and Germany signed multiple pacts and joint declarations of intent and exchanged agreements after bilateral talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and German Chancellor Angela Merkel in New Delhi on 1st November 2019.
- The agreements were inked for cooperation in fields such as space, civil aviation, maritime technology, artificial intelligence, digital technology, medicine, defence, cyber security and education.



What is the background?

- Prime Minister said the expertise of economic power houses like Germany could help in his government's aim to build a "new India" by 2022. He invited Germany to also take advantage of opportunities in defence production in dedicated corridors in Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.
- Germany is India's largest trading partner in Europe and more than 1,700 German companies operate in the country. Merkel said she was accompanied by a big German business delegation including small and medium enterprises (SMEs), who wanted to engage in business with India.

What is the significance?

- In the context of the on-going flux of uncertainties in world economy and politics like the Policies of the United States and China which is dubbed as new world Imperialism the ties between India and Germany assumes importance in global affairs.
- With certain commonalities like both countries i.e, Germany being the largest in Europe and India in South Asia and historical sufferings much in similarity like Germany had the challenge to rise again after the war and India after colonialism meets a great synergy in their objectives.

What is the cooperation of Germany to India in Economic context?

- Germany owns 2.91% of total FDI in India between April 2000 to December 2017 making it the 7th largest foreign investor in India.
- The famed SME sector in Germany, also known as "Mittelstand" are tied into the "Make in India" and have great

potential for creating jobs, bringing in new technologies, etc.

- The "Mittelstand" companies can help transform Indian manufacturing due to their expertise in technology which can boost up Indian manufacturing sector.
- Both the countries have a win-win situation as Germany is an economic powerhouse and India is a promising market that is growing as well as developing.
- Germany is an important trade and investment partner for India in particular with investment, technology, renewable energy, Infrastructure etc which is in boom.
- With India and Germany being part of G-4 vying for a permanent seat at the UNSC they have opportunity to build ties and achieve their goals together.
- With Brexit in place, Germany will be more important to India along with France who also considers economic ties with India.

What are the concerns?

- The bilateral investment treaties which insist that an investor has to first exhaust all domestic legal options before it can take a case towards international arbitration is a point of concern for both India and Germany.
- With US abandoning the principle of 'Most Favored Nation' status and India too imposing protectionist policies threaten the idea of Free and Fair trade.
- Domestic politics in Germany is much more complicated in the last 4 years like the refugee problems and growth rate is of concern in the ties.

What is the way forward?

- Addressing the legal issue of the bilateral investment treaty can help the "Mittelstand" companies in India and around 140 Indian companies operating in Germany.
- India and Germany can stand together and voice for Free and Fair trade which should be the main agenda in the ongoing global affairs.
- With strong institutional mechanisms in place and regular consultations and meetings, the problems of Domestic politics can have the least impact on the ties.

Conclusion

- India stands to gain from Germany which is an economic powerhouse and Germany from India, which is a promising market. By handling judiciously the impacts of 'Bilateral Investment Treaty' and with more cultural and people-to-people ties, India can establish a strong institutional relationship with Germany which can give a robust boost to Indian Economy as a whole.

3) India's Act East Policy



Why in news?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who left for Bangkok on 2nd November, said India will consider whether its concerns and interests in trade in goods, services, and investments are being fully accommodated when he attends the meeting of the RCEP there.

What is the background?

- PM Modi is in Bangkok to participate in the 16th ASEAN-India Summit on November 3.
- He will also attend the 14th East Asia Summit and the 3rd Summit meeting of nations negotiating a Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) agreement on November 4.

What is the significance?

- In his departure statement, Prime Minister said ASEAN related Summits are key elements of India's foreign policy, most notably our Act East Policy.
- Highlighting the importance of East Asia Summit, Prime Minister said it gives an opportunity to present our vision for the Indo-Pacific region. The Prime Minister added that during the visit, he will also hold bilateral meetings with a number of

other world leaders present in the Thai capital for related summit meetings.

What importance is East and Southeast Asia for India?

- Since 50s India is active in this area and took fillip in 1992 when PV Narasimha Rao became the Prime Minister and he initiated the 'Look East Policy'.
- In 1994 India joined ASEAN as a member of the forum and we continued with being part of East Asia summits.
- The region is mainly of India's interest cause of trade which is approximately \$600 million and is mounting onwards.
- Security is also a major dimension in this policy as securing Indo-Pacific region and securing India's status in the Indian Ocean region is equally important for us.

What is the History behind?

- There has been imbalance historically but has progressed in time with the 10 ASEAN Countries which were 6 when we launched the Look East policy in 1992. The bilateral trade was about \$2 billion.
- After the negotiations of free trade area in 2003 the trade was \$12 billion which was progressively compounded rate of growth was around 12%.
- From 2003-2010, when we finalized the FTA in goods the trade had increased very significantly.
- By 2012 when we marked the 20th anniversary as a dialogue partner with the ASEAN and 10th anniversary as the summit relationship our trade had grown to \$72 billion that means there was an annual progression of around 23% from 2003.

What are the issues related?

- The trade balance with ASEAN is a major concern as we had trade balance of \$8 billion in 2012-13 when we signed FTA in goods which today is in the tune of \$22 billion.
- The \$107 billion out of the total global trade deficit of India which is in the tune of \$180 billion is a huge number.
- The FTA with China will increase the trade deficit as without FTA itself we have a trade deficit of \$55-70 billion that simply means we are throwing out our doors open to cheap low quality Chinese goods coming into the country.

- If in the area of steel, where China has 50% of global capacity or textile or pharma or plastic or aluminum or chemicals the trade with China is a matter of concern to Indian companies and manufacturers.
- It is also a concern for dairy products as signing RCEP will allow dairy products from Australia hit the local farmers badly.

Why RCEP is significant?

- India is on anonymous interest of ASEAN countries for its huge market since the inception of RCEP.
- It is also the interest of India to connect with these countries not only for trade and commerce but for the 4 pillars/ 4 Cs - Connectivity, Culture, Commerce and Capacity Building.

What is the way forward?

- Reducing trade deficit with 16 ASEAN members through RCEP in a macro level.
- Getting positive response for services and skilled labour movement which should be free and fair to reduce the trade deficit.
- Making Indian goods and prices competitive to face the challenges of cheap imports.
- To make changes in domestic policy to make business more easily comparatively.

- Use for full potential the informal meetings to work out trade deals like the Mamallapuram informal meeting between India and China.
- India has to look at the entire region very carefully to play a significant role and counter Chinese influence.
- Building more and more ties with the neighborhood countries and friendly ASEAN nations like foray into South China sea, Indo Pacific region, involvement in Quad, etc
- Look at the niche areas of India's interests like civilizational, cultural like the Cholas empire in the 10th century, support for India's independence, shift from interstate to inter social linkages etc.
- Integrate the North east states for better connectivity with the ASEAN region.

Conclusion

- With one year time for signature procedures for RCEP, India as well as ASEAN have ample amount of time to accommodate the demands of all . With India seeing success in West Asia, it should be more conscious and geographically construct its relations between the ASEAN nations to counter the China wave.

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