

OFFICERS' Pulse

ISSUE NO. 27 | 8TH DECEMBER TO 14TH DECEMBER, 2019

Coverage.

The Hindu

PIB

Yojana

Rajya Sabha TV

All India Radio

At a Glance & In Depth.

Polity and Social Issues

Economy

International Relations

Environment

Science and Tech

Culture



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News @ a glance

POLITY

1) Accessible India Campaign

About:

- **Accessible India Campaign** (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan) is a nation-wide Campaign launched by **Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD)** of **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment** to provide universal accessibility to persons with disabilities.

Aim of the Campaign:

- The campaign aims at providing equal opportunity to persons with disabilities to participate in all aspects of life and live independently.
- The Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan focuses on developing accessible physical environment, transportation system and Information & communication ecosystem.
- The Government of India with firm commitment towards socio-economic transformation of persons with disabilities is making efforts to create mass awareness for universal accessibility.

Components of Accessible India Campaign

- It has the following three important components:

Built Environment Accessibility

- An accessible government building is one, where persons with disabilities have no barrier in entering it and using all the facilities therein. This covers the built environment – services, steps and ramps, corridors, entry gates, emergency exits, parking – as well as indoor and outdoor facilities including lighting, signage, alarm systems, and toilets.

Transportation System Accessibility

- Enhancing the proportion of accessible airports, Railway Stations, and other public Transports.

Information and Communication Eco-System Accessibility

- Enhancing the proportion of accessible and usable public documents and websites that meet internationally recognized accessibility standards and sign language interpreters.
- Enhancing the proportion of daily captioning and sign-language interpretation of public television news programs.

Other Government Measures related to the Rights of Persons with Disabilities:

- India is a **signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)**. **Article 9** of UNCRPD casts an obligation on **all the signatory governments** to take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas.
- All the States are required to follow **the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995** under sections 44, 45 and 46 categorically provides for non-discrimination in transport, non-discrimination on the road and non-discrimination in built environment respectively
- Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) through Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan) aims to develop an inclusive society in which equal opportunities and access is provided for the growth and development of Persons with Disabilities.

Why in News?

- The original deadlines under the Accessible India campaign were July 2016 for conducting an accessibility audit of 25-50 of the most important government buildings in

50 cities and making them completely accessible and March 2018.

- Under the **Rights of PwD Act, 2016**, all existing and new public buildings have to follow the accessibility standards notified on June 15, 2017. The existing buildings were given five years to comply. The deadlines have not been complied with. **Due to slow progress, revised deadlines have been extended to March 2020.**

2) Personal Data Protection Bill

About Personal Data Protection Bill

- Personal data is data which pertains to characteristics, traits or attributes of

identity, which can be used to identify an individual. This includes financial data, biometric data, caste, religious or political beliefs, or any other category of data specified by the government, in consultation with the Authority and the concerned sectoral regulator.

Key provisions of Data Protection Bill:

- The Bill seeks to provide for the protection of personal data of individuals, and establishes a Data Protection Authority for the same.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Personal data shall be processed only for purposes that are clear, specific and lawful

Individuals will have the right to withdraw consent

All firms and agencies will have to appoint data protection officers

They will also act as point of contact for the individuals for raising grievances

Exemptions have been provided for processing of personal data for journalistic purpose, or for a purely personal or domestic purpose

The Centre shall notify Data Protection Authority of India

A data protection fund and a data protection awareness fund to be set up through proceeds from the penalties and the fines

Firms will have to ensure at least one copy of personal data to be stored in India

'Critical' personal data shall only be processed in a server or data centre located in India

Penalties range from 2-4% of a company's worldwide turnover, or fines between ₹5 crore and ₹15 crore, whichever is higher

Existing Acts such as Right to Information, Aadhaar and Information Technology will have to be amended

Applicability:

- The Bill governs the processing of personal data by: (i) government, (ii) companies incorporated in India, and (iii) foreign companies dealing with personal data of individuals in India. .

Rights of the individual:

- The Bill sets out certain rights of the individual (or data principal).

Grounds for processing personal data:

- The Bill allows processing of data by fiduciaries only if consent is provided by the individual. However, in certain

circumstances, personal data can be processed without consent. These include:

- (i) If required by the State for providing benefits to the individual,
- (ii) Legal proceedings,
- (iii) To respond to a medical emergency.

Social media intermediaries:

- The Bill defines these to include intermediaries which enable online interaction between users and allow for sharing of information.

Data Protection Authority:

- The Bill sets up a Data Protection Authority which may: (i) take steps to protect interests of individuals, (ii) prevent misuse of personal data, and (iii) ensure compliance with the Bill.
- It will consist of a chairperson and six members, with at least 10 years' expertise in the field of data protection and information technology. Orders of the Authority can be appealed to an Appellate Tribunal. Appeals from the Tribunal will go to the Supreme Court.

Transfer of data outside India:

- Sensitive personal data may be transferred outside India for processing if explicitly consented to by the individual, and subject to certain additional conditions.

Exemptions:

- The central government can exempt any of its agencies from the provisions of the Act: (i) in interest of security of state, public order, sovereignty and integrity of India and friendly relations with foreign states, and (ii) for preventing incitement to commission of any cognisable offence (i.e. arrest without warrant) relating to the above matters.
- And in prevention, investigation, or prosecution of any offence, or personal, domestic, or journalistic purposes.

Sharing of non-personal data with government:

- The central government may direct data fiduciaries to provide it with any: (i) non-personal data and (ii) anonymised personal data (where it is not possible to identify data principal) for better targeting of services.

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet gave its approval to the Personal Data Protection Bill that seeks to lay down a legal framework to preserve the sanctity of "consent" in data sharing and penalize those breaching privacy norms.

The draft bill, the Personal Data Protection Bill, was prepared by a high-level expert committee headed by former Supreme Court judge B.N. Srikrishna.

3) Inner Line Permit

What is Inner Line Permit?

- The Inner Line Permit is an official travel document that allows Indian citizens to stay in an area under the ILP system. The document is currently required by visitors to Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Nagaland and Mizoram.
- The ILP is issued by the concerned state government. The permits issued are mostly of different kinds, provided separately for tourists, tenants and for other purposes.

History of ILP:

- In 1873, under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act, the British, in a bid to protect the Crown's (commercial) interests, framed regulations restricting the entry and regulating the stay of outsiders in designated areas.
- The Act was brought in to prevent "British subjects" (Indians) from trading within these regions.
- However, after partition, the Indian government replaced "British subjects" with "Citizen of India" and retained the ILP.
- This was to address local concerns about protecting the interests of the indigenous people from outsiders belonging to other Indian states.

What is ILP's connection with the Citizenship Act?

- The Citizenship Act enables non-Muslim refugees (Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis and Christians) from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan who arrived in the country before December 31, 2014, to obtain Indian citizenship.
- Although the rest of mainland India is protesting the controversial Act for being anti-Muslim, for the northeast, the worry is entirely different.
- If the Act is implemented without the ILP, then the beneficiaries under CAB will become Indian citizens and will be allowed to settle anywhere in the country.
- However, the implementation of ILP bars refugees from settling in the states under the ILP system.

Why were the north-eastern states protesting against Citizenship Amendment Act (CAB)?

- There have been protests across the north-eastern States against the Bill as it nullifies the 1985 Assam Accord, which called for detection and deportation of anyone who entered the State after March 24, 1971.
- The Bill makes the Accord redundant as it is likely to benefit non-Muslims among the over 19 lakh people excluded from the National Register of Citizens.
- And moreover the Northeast is home to 238 indigenous tribes that constitute 26 per cent of the region's population and the influx of Bengali-speaking refugees will threaten their identity.

Exempt from CAB

- Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram, protected by the ILP requirement, have been **exempted from the provisions of the CAB along with the whole of Meghalaya, Mizoram and the tribal areas of Tripura and Assam as covered in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.**
- Residents of other States have to mandatorily obtain an ILP to visit the protected States under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873.

Why in News?

- Except Dimapur, the ILP has been applicable to the rest of Nagaland. Known as "mini India", Dimapur district has a mixed population.

4) SC flags delay in appointment of judges

Why in news?

- The Supreme Court in its judicial order has said that the 213 names recommended for appointment to various High Courts are pending with the government.
- The court has said that at least the names on which the Supreme Court Collegium, the High Courts and the governments had agreed upon should be appointed within six months.
- The number of judges appointed to the High Court has steadily decreased since 2017. Only 65 judges have been appointed to High Courts in 2019.

- The High Courts are functioning at nearly 50% of their sanctioned judicial strength. Of a total 1,079 judges sanctioned in the High Courts, there are 410 vacancies.

Empty chairs

38% of all sanctioned posts for judges in High Courts are lying vacant as of December 1, 2019. The six HCs with most vacancies:

Name of High Court	Sanctioned strength	Working strength	Vacancies	% of vacancies
A.P.	37	15	22	59.46
Rajasthan	50	21	29	58
J&K	17	8	9	52.94
Patna	53	27	26	49.06
Orissa	27	14	13	48.15
Gujarat	52	28	24	46.15

What is the collegium system?

- It is the system of **appointment and transfer of judges** that has **evolved through judgments of the Supreme Court**, and not by an Act of Parliament or by a provision of the Constitution.
- The Supreme Court collegium is headed by the Chief Justice of India and comprises four other senior most judges of the court.
- A High Court collegium is led by its Chief Justice and four other senior most judges of that court. Names recommended for appointment by a High Court collegium reaches the government only after approval by the CJI and the Supreme Court collegiums.
- Judges of the higher judiciary are appointed only through the collegium system — and the government has a role only after names have been decided by the collegium.
- The government's role is limited to getting an inquiry conducted by the Intelligence Bureau (IB) if a lawyer is to be elevated as a judge in the High Court or the Supreme Court.
- It can also raise objections and seek clarifications regarding the collegium's choices, but if the collegium reiterates the same names, **the government is bound, under Constitution Bench judgments, to appoint them as judges.**

Constitutional provisions regarding the appointments of judges

- Judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts are appointed by the President under **Articles 124(2)** and **217** of the Constitution. The President is required to hold consultations with such of the judges of the Supreme Court and of the High Courts as he may deem necessary.

- **Article 124(2):** "Every Judge of the Supreme Court shall be appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal after consultation with such of the Judges of the Supreme Court and of the High Courts in the States as the President may deem necessary for the purpose and shall hold office until he attains the age of sixty-five years. Provided that in the case of appointment of a Judge other than the Chief Justice, the Chief Justice of India shall always be consulted."
- **Article 217:** "Every Judge of a High Court shall be appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal after consultation with the Chief Justice of India, the Governor of the State, and, in the case of appointment of a Judge other than the Chief Justice, the Chief Justice of the High Court."

Evolution of the Collegium System

- The **First Judges Case (1981)** ruled that the "consultation" with the CJI in the matter of appointments must be full and effective.
- However, it rejected the idea that the CJI's opinion, albeit carrying great weight, should have primacy.
- The **Second Judges Case (1993)** introduced the Collegium system, holding that "consultation" really meant "concurrence".
- It added that it was not the CJI's individual opinion, but an institutional opinion formed in consultation with the two senior-most judges in the Supreme Court.
- On a Presidential Reference for its opinion, the Supreme Court, in the **Third Judges Case (1998)** expanded the Collegium to a five-member body, comprising the CJI and four of his senior-most colleagues.

The procedure followed by the Collegium

- **Appointment of CJI**
- The President of India appoints the CJI and the other SC judges. **The outgoing CJI recommends his successor.**

- In practice, it has been strictly by seniority ever since the supersession controversy of the 1970s. The Union Law Minister forwards the recommendation to the PM who, in turn, advises the President.

For other Supreme Court Judges

- The **proposal is initiated by the CJI.** The CJI consults the rest of the Collegium members, as well as the senior-most judge of the court hailing from the High Court to which the recommended person belongs.
- The consultees must record their opinions in writing and it should form part of the file. The Collegium sends the recommendation to the Law Minister, who forwards it to the Prime Minister to advise the President.

For High Courts

- The Chief Justice of the High Courts is appointed as per the policy of having Chief Justices from outside the respective States. High Court judges are recommended by a Collegium comprising the CJI and two senior-most judges.
- The proposal, however, is initiated by the Chief Justice of the High Court concerned in consultation with two senior-most colleagues. The recommendation is sent to the Chief Minister, who advises the Governor to send the proposal to the Union Law Minister.

Why has the collegium system been criticised?

- The system is non-transparent, since it does not involve any official mechanism or secretariat.
- It is seen as a closed-door affair with no prescribed norms regarding eligibility criteria or even the selection procedure.
- There is no public knowledge of how and when a collegium meets, and how it takes its decisions.
- Lawyers too are usually in the dark on whether their names have been considered for elevation as a judge.
- An attempt made to replace it by a '**National Judicial Appointments Commission**' was struck down by the court in 2015 on the grounds that it posed a threat to the independence of the judiciary.
- The 5-judge Bench sealed the fate of the proposed system that held that judges' appointments shall continue to be made by

the collegium system in which the CJI will have “the last word”.

- “There is no question of accepting an alternative procedure, which does not ensure primacy of the judiciary in the matter of selection and appointment of judges to the higher judiciary,” said the majority opinion.

5) Google liable for defamation cases before Act change: SC

What is Defamation?

- Defamation means **destroying the reputation** of an individual or organisation through speech or written manner or both. Defamation gives rise to both civil and criminal liability.
- In India, defamation cases can be filed under two heads. It is either civil or criminal.
- In civil defamation, a person who is defamed can move either the High Court or the subordinate courts and seek damages in the form of monetary compensation. There is no punishment in the form of jail sentence
- In criminal defamation, the person against whom a defamation case is filed might be sentenced to **two years’ imprisonment** or fined or both.
- There are two sections under IPC, viz. Sec 499 and Sec 500, which pertains to the criminal defamation.

- **Sec 499:** Whoever, by words either **spoken** or intended to be read, or by signs or by visible representations, makes or publishes any **imputation** concerning any person intending to harm, or knowing or having reason to believe that such imputation will harm, the reputation of such person, is said, except in the cases hereinafter expected, to defame that person.
- **Sec 500:** Punishment for defamation: Whoever **defames** another shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.

Why in News?

- Supreme Court has held that internet intermediaries like **Google** cannot be protected from criminal defamation cases registered against them prior to October 27, 2009.

Too big, too fast

What the government said in the Supreme Court on the Internet traffic and the role of intermediaries

- Internet offers information on a mind-boggling variety of subjects. High speed and high volume render pre-censorship difficult
- Viewers exercise choice as to what content they wish to view or read. There is automatic uploading without any application of mind on the part of the website/platform



▪ 3.5 billion people in the world accessed the Internet in 2015

▪ 3 million photographs were uploaded on Facebook per day

▪ 510 comments, 2,93,000 statuses are posted per minute

The Information Technology (Amendment) Act

- It aims at tightening procedures and safeguards for monitoring and interception of data to prevent cyber crimes.
- Besides monitoring and interception, the amended Act also deals with the appointment of **Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (ICERT), which deals with computer security and situations arising from cyber attacks.**
- The IT (Amendment) Act 2008 was passed by both the houses of Parliament on December 23, 2008. The Act was notified after the assent of the President on February 5, 2009.
- The amendment rules include various sections such as Procedure and Safeguards for Interception, Monitoring and Decryption of Information, Blocking Access of Information by Public and Monitoring and Collecting Traffic Data.
- The Information Technology Act was enacted in 2000 with a view to provide legal recognition to e-commerce and e-transactions, to facilitate e-governance and prevent computer-based crimes.
- However, the rapid increase in the use of internet has led to a spate in crime like child pornography, cyber terrorism, publishing sexually explicit content in electronic form and video voyeurism. So, penal provisions were required to be included in the Information Technology Act, 2000.

News in Detail:

- As it was only on October 27, 2009 that Parliament amended the Information

Technology Act of 2000 to protect online intermediaries from liability for criminally defamatory content published in them by third parties.

- The amended **Section 79 of the 2000 Act provided that “an intermediary shall not be liable for any third party information, data, or communication link made available or hosted by him.”**

- The amendment gave almost blanket protection to intermediaries from legal action under Section 499/500 (criminal defamation) of the Indian Penal Code.
- In the recent judgement, it was held that Section 79 of the Act, prior to its substitution, did not protect an intermediary in regard to the offence under Section 499/500 of the IPC.

ENVIRONMENT

1) In Protecting the Kashmir Valley, Wular Lake Has Become Harder to Save

Wular Lake

- It is situated in Bandipora/Baramulla district in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The lake basin was formed as a result of tectonic activity and is fed by the Jhelum River.
- It is Asia's Largest freshwater lake.
- The lake's size varies seasonally from 12 to 100 square miles (30 to 260 square kilometres).
- Wular Lake is an important fish habitat, the main species being the common carp.
- **It is the only Lake of India, which is protected by INDIAN NAVY.**

- Student's please note that, in pulse 25th issue, Kolleru is mentioned as largest freshwater lake. (Incomplete statement). Please note:
- **WULAR LAKE as LARGEST FRESHWATER LAKE of INDIA**
- **Kolleru is largest freshwater Lake of Andhra Pradesh.**

Why in News?

- A short film 'Saving the Saviour', on Wular Lake and its growing pollution was released. It was made by Jalal Ud Din Baba (a resident of Wular Lake).
- It reports have also given instances of shrinking of lake.
- There is spread of the **invasive alligator weed** is slowly destroying the beneficial vegetation in the lake.
- Due to the problem of security in J&K, there has been little effort in rehabilitative work of Wular Lake.



2) Panel pulls up 19 States for tyre disposal

What is tyre pyrolysis?

- Tyre pyrolysis refers to a technique of breaking down used tyres **in the absence of oxygen**.
- Tyre pieces are put at temperatures between 250° C and 500° which produce **liquid oil and gases**.
- **Pyrolysis leaves fine carbon matter, pyro-gas, oil as residue** and if they are inadequately managed, these by-products **poses health risks**.

About CPCB:

- The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), statutory organisation, was constituted in 1974 under the **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974**.
- Further, CPCB was entrusted with the powers and functions under the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.

Functions of the CPCB

- Advise the Central Government on any matter concerning the prevention and control of water and air pollution and improvement of the quality of air.
- Plan and cause to be executed a nationwide program for the prevention, control or abatement of water and air pollution;
- Coordinate the activities of the State Board and resolve disputes among them;
- Provide technical assistance and guidance to the State Boards, carry out and sponsor investigations and research relating to problems of water and air pollution, and for their prevention, control or abatement;

- Plan and organise training of persons engaged in programme on the prevention, control or abatement of water and air pollution;
- Organise through mass media, a comprehensive mass awareness programme on the prevention, control or abatement of water and air pollution;
- Collect, compile and publish technical and statistical data relating to water and air pollution and the measures devised for their effective prevention, control or abatement;
- Prepare manuals, codes and guidelines relating to treatment and disposal of sewage and trade effluents as well as for stack gas cleaning devices, stacks and ducts;
- Disseminate information in respect of matters relating to water and air pollution and their prevention and control;
- Lay down, modify or annul, in consultation with the State Governments concerned, the standards for stream or well, and lay down standards for the quality of air; etc.

Why in news?

- Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) has asked 19 states to shut down the tyre pyrolysis units.
- They condemn them as polluting and harmful to the health of workers employed.
- The notice also emphasised on the **import** of hazardous substances — these include **used tyres**, saying that they ought to be strictly regulated.

What are other issues about tyre residue management?

- India is a **recipient of used tyres from Australia and the U.K.**, which are sent for recycling and disposal.
- **India discards about 100 million tyres everyday** and only a fraction of it is recycled.
- As of 2016-17, 12% increase in tyre production has been noticed from the previous year.
- India is also **responsible for 6% of the global tyre waste**, according to a 2017 report by environmentalist group Chintan.
- The National Green Tribunal in 2014 prohibited used tyres from being burnt in the open or being used as fuel in brick kilns, because of the toxic emissions.

3) Odisha awarded 'World Habitat Award' for Jaga Mission

Why in news?

- Odisha won the world habitat award for Jaga Mission.
- The award is given by **World Habitat**, a UK-based organization, in partnership with **United Nation (UN)-Habitat**, **every year**, in recognition of innovative, outstanding, and revolutionary ideas, projects, and programmes from across the world.
- Each year two winners receive £10,000 each and a trophy, presented at a global UN-Habitat event.



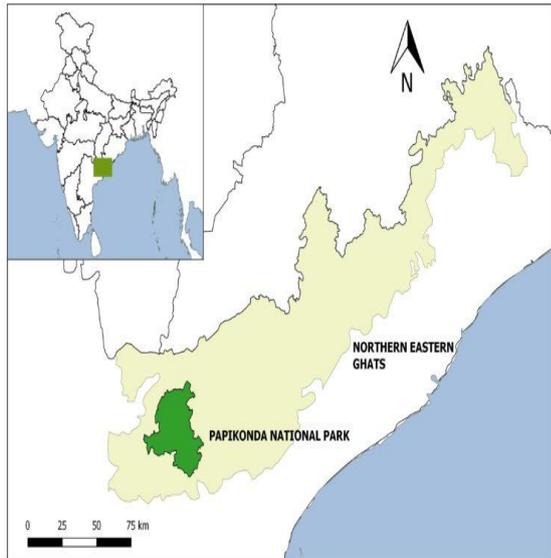
What is Jaga Mission?

- Odisha Liveable Habitat Mission "JAGA" is a society under Housing & Urban Development Department, Government of Odisha.
- Odisha Liveable Habitat Mission (OLHM) - "JAGA" aims at transforming the slums into livable habitat with all necessary civic infrastructure and services at par with the better off areas within the same urban local body (ULB).
- It also aims to continuously improve the standard of the infrastructure and services and access to livelihood opportunities.

4) Papikonda National Park

Why in the news?

- Papikonda National Park is located in East Godavari and West Godavari districts of Andhra Pradesh and Khammam district of Telangana.
- The Park lies in the **River Godavari basin**.
- The forests of the Park cut through the Papikonda hill range. The nearby cities to the Park are Khammam, Suryapet and Warangal.
- The floral variety of the Park is mainly Eastern Ghats vegetation. The area consists of **dry deciduous tropical forests**.



Why in news?

- The experts led by Kerala-based environmental forum — Warblers and Waders — would carry out the survey in papikonda national park with an aim to record all the species of butterfly.
- The scientific exercise will offer a picture of the existing biodiversity of the park. The diversity of butterfly species would be considered as a health indicator of the national park.
- Their special aim will be an exclusive study on the “**Migratory species of Butterfly**” in the national park in the Papikonda hill range in the Eastern Ghats.
- This study will be laid in the ‘**Conference of Parties to Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS)**’ to be held at Gandhinagar, Gujarat in Feb. 2020.

What is CMS?

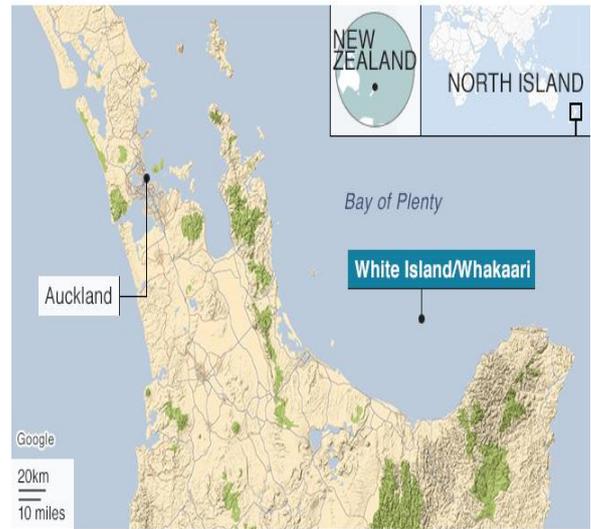
- As an environmental treaty under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme, **CMS provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats.**
- CMS brings together the States through which migratory animals pass, the Range States, and **lays the legal foundation for internationally coordinated conservation** measures throughout a migratory range.
- As the **only global convention specializing in the conservation of migratory species**, their habitats and migration routes, CMS complements and co-operates with a number of other

international organizations, NGOs and partners in the media as well as in the corporate sector.

5) White Island- Volcanic eruption

Why in news?

New Zealand volcano



- A volcanic eruption took place at White Island, which is located 50 km away from the New Zealand mainland in the Pacific Ocean.
- It is located in the Bay of Plenty.
- White Island is **the tip of an undersea volcano.**
- White Island is New Zealand’s most active cone volcano. About **70% of the volcano lies under the sea.**
- The island is also known by the indigenous Maori name Whakaari.

6) Heavy metals contaminating India’s rivers

Why in News?

- The third edition of an exercise conducted by the Central Water Commission (CWC) has found that two-thirds of the water quality stations spanning India’s major rivers showed contamination by one or more heavy metals, exceeding safe limits set by the Bureau of Indian Standards.
- Samples from only one-third of water quality stations were safe.
- Iron emerged as the most common contaminant.

- The other major contaminants found in the samples were lead, nickel, chromium, cadmium and copper.

River	Chromium	Lead	Iron
Ganga	Exceeds		Exceeds
Yamuna			Exceeds
Brahmaputra			Exceeds
Ramganga		Exceeds	
Rapti	Exceeds		Exceeds
Narmada			Exceeds
Godavari			Exceeds

SOURCE: CENTRAL WATER COMMISSION STUDY

- Lead, cadmium, nickel, chromium and copper contamination were more **common in non-monsoon** periods while iron, lead, chromium and copper exceeded 'tolerance limits' in **monsoon periods** most of the time.
- The CWC exercise was **restricted to surface water**.

What are the main sources of metal pollution?

- The reasons for contamination, according to the authors of the report, were "**population growth and rise in agricultural and industrial activities**".
- The main sources of heavy metal pollution are **mining, milling, plating and surface finishing industries** that discharge a variety of toxic metals into the environment.

7) Conference of Parties 25 (CoP 25)

- The Climate Conference (held in Madrid after the meeting was moved from Chile due to unrest there), COP25, is the actual Conference of the Parties to the **UN Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** which is tasked with making sure that the Convention, (and now the 2015 Paris Agreement, which strengthens the Convention), are being implemented.

What are UNFCCC and COP?

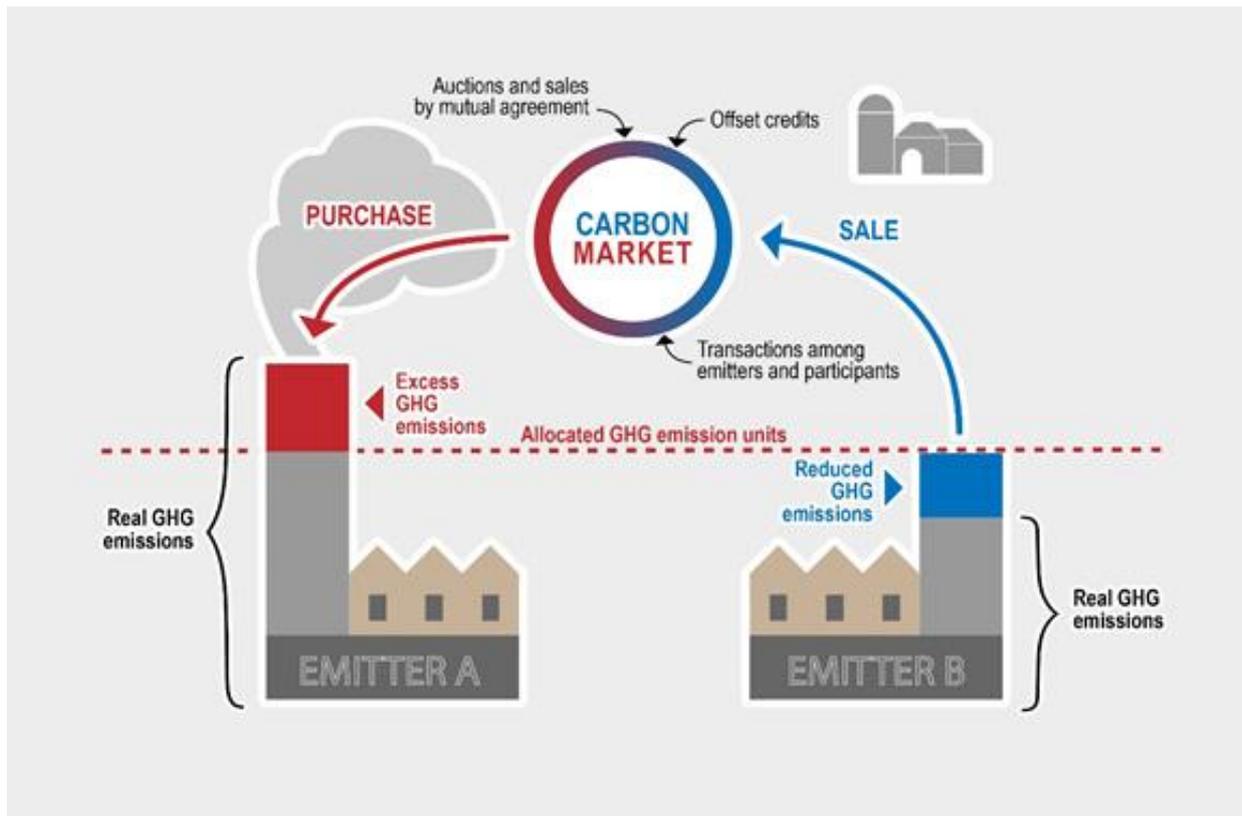
- As for the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), this document was signed at the **1992 Earth Summit in**

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. In the treaty, nations agreed to "**stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere**" to prevent dangerous interference from human activity on the climate system.

- Today, 197 countries are parties to the treaty. **Every year since the treaty entered into force in 1994, a "conference of the parties", or COP, has been held to discuss how to move forward.**
- Madrid organised the 25th COP, therefore COP25.



- **What is Paris Agreement?**
- The Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015, in which all countries agreed to step up efforts to limit global warming to 1.5°C above pre-industrial temperatures and boost climate action financing.
- One of the agenda for COP 25 was to finalise rules of Paris Agreement which will be applied post 2020.
- **What is Carbon Market?**
- Carbon markets **aim to reduce greenhouse gas** (GHG, or "carbon") emissions cost effectively by setting limits on emissions and enabling the **trading of emission units**, which are instruments representing emission reductions.
- Trading enables entities (countries) that can reduce emissions at a lower cost to be paid to do so by higher cost emitters, **thus lowering the economic cost of reducing emissions.**



Takeaways of COP25

- The nearly 200 governments that are parties to the 2015 Paris climate deal **didn't agree on uncompleted sections** of the rules for carbon markets and trading emissions credits, covered by Article 6 of the Paris Agreement.
- It's the second year in a row that countries failed to agree on carbon market rules. (the last in Poland).
- The delegates have decided to meet again next year with hope a final deal can be reached at November's **COP26 in Glasgow (Scotland)**.
- They did agree on **stronger language for countries to boost their climate** pledges under a Paris Agreement deadline next year.
- The European Union, for example, committed to **carbon neutrality** (adding of carbon in the atmosphere is equal to removal of carbon from the atmosphere) **by 2050**, and 73 nations announced that they will submit an enhanced climate action plan (or Nationally Determined Contribution).
- A groundswell of ambition for a cleaner economy was also evident a regional and local level, with 14 regions, 398 cities, 786 businesses and 16 investors are working

towards achieving net-zero CO2 emissions by 2050.

- Developing and emerging countries **complained** that the focus on cutting emissions was undermining their call to boost funding to adapt to climate change and deal with the destruction of climate-related shocks.

Issue on setting new Carbon Market

- A group of countries led by Brazil, backed by **India** but also including rich nations such as Australia, fought for a set of rules of carbon market that many other countries are feeling faulty.
- **Brazil insisted that any emissions reductions from its massive forests or other projects could be used both for its own Paris targets, as well as by the countries that pay it.**
- For example, if Australia is reducing 2% of carbon emissions and trading it with Japan, they demand that both Australia and Japan will represent this 2% in their Paris Targets
- Opponents called that **"double counting"** and refused to go along.
- This issue have been pushed to next year round of round of talks.

India and COP 25

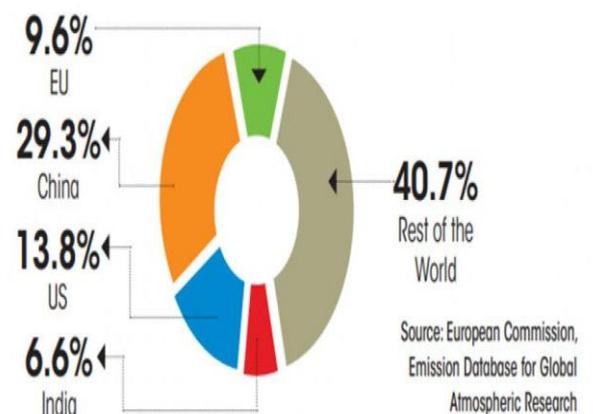
- India's headline pledge under its NDC is to reduce the emission intensity of its GDP (greenhouse gas, or GHG, emissions per unit GDP) by **33-35 per cent over 2005 levels by 2030**, and the 2019 Emissions Gap Report notes that **the country is on track to exceed it by 15 per cent**.
- **In Madrid, it was noted that India has reduced emission intensity of GDP (gross domestic product) by 21 per cent and is on track to achieve the goal of 35 per cent emission reduction as promised in Paris in 2015.**
- In addition, India has committed to generate 40 per cent of its installed power capacity from non-fossil sources by 2030, with an interim target of 175 GW of non-hydro renewables by 2022.
- India has also pledged an additional carbon sink equivalent to 2.5-3 billion tonnes of CO₂ by 2030 through forest and tree cover.
- the Climate Action Tracker has rated the country's efforts as '2 degree compatible', which means that if all countries made efforts like India's, the average global temperature rise could be limited to 2°C by 2100. **India is the world's only major economy to be rated so.**
- India suffered the maximum number of deaths — 2,081 — from climate-triggered extreme weather events in 2018, according to The Global Climate Risk 2020 report.
- India was second in terms of economic losses in 2018. It came third in terms of both, human fatalities and economic losses, when considered for a two-decade period.

Some of the steps taken by India:

- India launched the **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure** which is a partnership to support countries through knowledge exchange and provide technical support on developing disaster and climate resilient infrastructure
- India has put carbon tax on coal production at the rate of 6 USD per tonne.
- India will be investing about 50 million dollars in water conservation.
- India has aimed that 26 million hectares of degraded land will be restored by 2030.
- India is aiming to blend 20 per cent ethanol in petrol by 2030.
- From 1st April 2020, vehicles in India will be BS VI compliant.

Polluters-in-chief...

These four nations accounted for almost 60% global CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel combustion in 2017



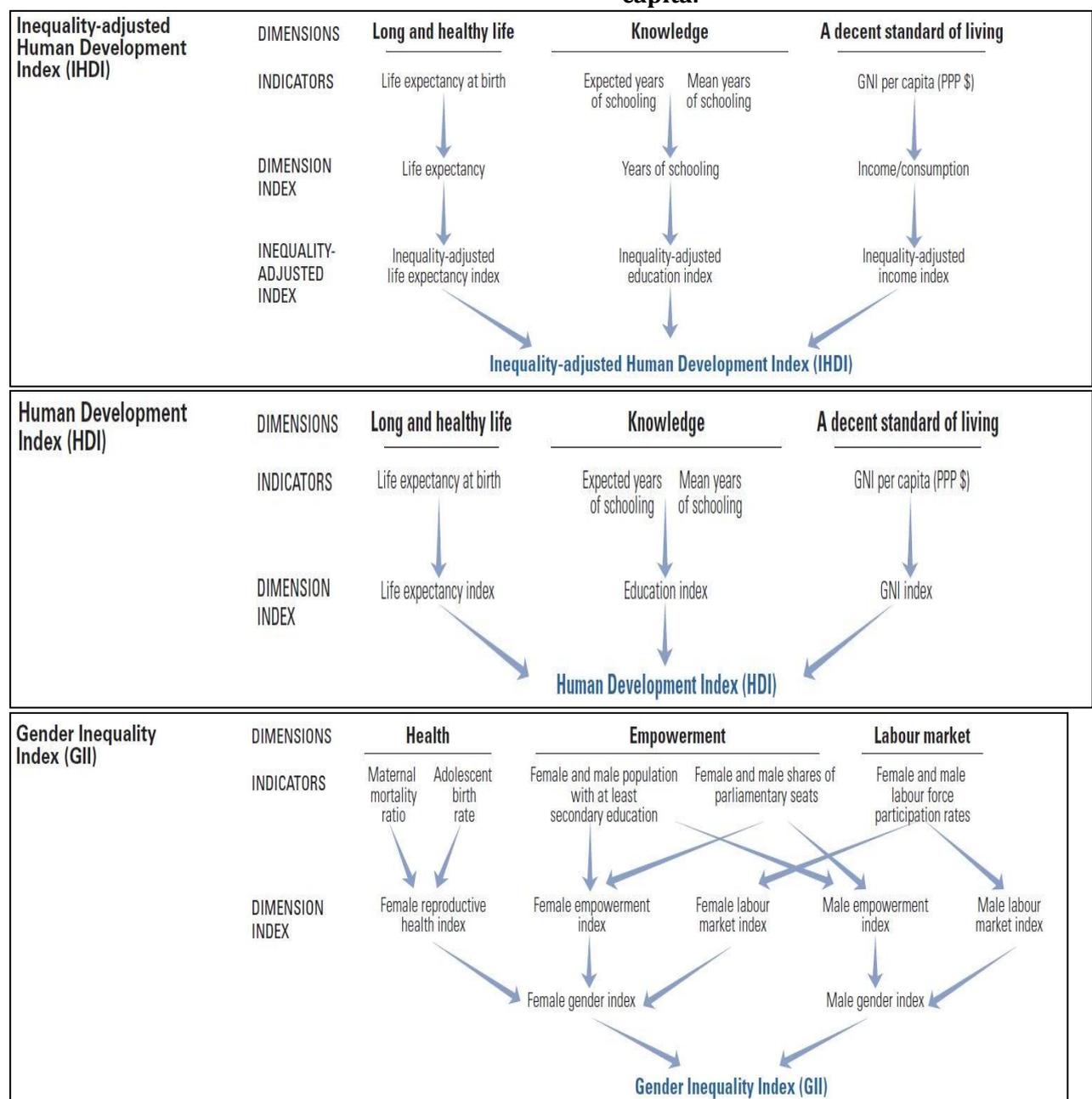
ECONOMY

1) HDI (129), IHDI (130), GII (122) About Human Development Index (HDI)

- The HDI was created to emphasize that **people and their capabilities** should be the ultimate **criteria for assessing the development** of a country, not economic growth alone.
- The HDI is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a **long and healthy life**,

being knowledgeable and **have a decent standard of living.**

- The health dimension is assessed by **life expectancy at birth.**
- The education dimension is measured by **mean of years of schooling for adults aged 25 years and more, and expected years of schooling for children of school entering age.**
- The standard of living dimension is measured by **gross national income per capita.**



- The HDI is the **geometric mean** of normalized indices for each of the three dimensions.
- The HDI simplifies and captures only part of what human development entails. It **does not reflect on inequalities, poverty, human security, empowerment**, etc.

About **Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI)**

- The IHDI combines a country's average achievements in health, education and income with how those achievements are distributed among the country's population by "**discounting**" each dimension's average value **according to its level of inequality**.
- Thus, the IHDI is **distribution-sensitive average level of human development**.
- Two countries with different distributions of achievements can have the same average HDI value.
- Under perfect equality the IHDI is equal to the HDI, but falls below the HDI when inequality rises.
- The difference between the IHDI and HDI is the **human development cost of inequality**, also termed – the **overall loss to human development due to inequality**.

About **Gender Inequality Index (GII)**

- It measures gender inequalities in three important aspects of human development—
- **reproductive health**, measured by **maternal mortality ratio** and **adolescent birth rates**;
- **empowerment**, measured by **proportion of parliamentary seats occupied by females** and **proportion of adult females and males** aged 25 years and older with at least some **secondary education**; and
- **economic status**, expressed as **labour market participation** and measured by labour force participation rate of female and male populations aged 15 years and older.
- The GII is built on the same framework as the IHDI—to better expose differences in the distribution of achievements between women and men.
- It measures the **human development costs of gender inequality**.
- Thus the **higher the GII value the more disparities** between females and males and the more loss to human development.

Why in News?

- The **Human Development Report (HDR) of 2019** was released by the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**.

Key findings of HDR 2019

HDI

- **India ranks 129 out of 189** countries on the 2019 Human Development Index — up one slot **from the 130th position in 2018**.
- **Norway, Switzerland, Ireland** occupied the top three positions in that order.
- Among India's neighbours, Sri Lanka (71) and China (85) are higher up the rank scale while Bhutan (134), Bangladesh (135), Myanmar (145), Nepal (147), Pakistan (152) and Afghanistan (170) were ranked lower on the list.
- As per the report, South Asia was the fastest growing region in human development progress witnessing a 46% growth over 1990-2018, followed by East Asia and the Pacific at 43%.
- **India's HDI value increased by 50%** (from 0.431 to 0.647) over this period, which places it above the average for other South Asian countries (0.642).

IHDI

- For inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI), **India's position drops by one position to 130** out of 150 countries, losing nearly half the progress (.647 to .477) made in the past 30 years.
- The report notes that group-based inequalities persist, especially affecting women and girls.
- No place in the world has gender equality.
- The report also highlights that **new forms of inequalities** will manifest in future **through climate change and technological transformation** which have the potential to deepen existing social and economic fault lines.

GII

- In the Gender Inequality Index (GII), **India is at 122 out of 162 countries**.
- Neighbours China (39), Sri Lanka (86), Bhutan (99), Myanmar (106) were placed above India.
- The report notes that **the world is not on track to achieve gender equality by 2030 as per the UN's Sustainable Development Goals**.
- It forecasts that it may take 202 years to close the gender gap in economic

opportunity — one of the three indicators of the GII.

- The report presents a new index indicating how prejudices and social beliefs obstruct gender equality, which shows that only 14% of women and 10% of men worldwide have no gender bias.
- The report notes that this indicates a backlash to women's empowerment as these biases have shown a growth especially in areas where more power is involved, including in India.

2) International Financial Services Centres (IFSC)

About IFSC

- An IFSC is a jurisdiction that **provides world class financial services to non-residents and residents**, to the extent permissible under the current regulations, in a currency **other than the domestic currency** (Indian rupee) **of the location** where the IFSC is located.
- **Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City)** multi services special economic zone (SEZ) has set up the first International Financial Service Centre in India (IFSC) in accordance with the **SEZ Act 2005 (SEZ Act)**, **SEZ Rules 2006** and the regulations made thereunder.
- The IFSC in GIFT City (IFSC-GIFT) is being developed as a global financial and information technology services hub designed to be at or above par with globally benchmarked financial centres such as London, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Dubai.

Types of IFSCs

- IFSCs are generally classified into four.
- **Global Financial Centers (GFCs)** - serve clients from all over the world in the provision of the widest possible array of international financial services (IFS); eg. **London, New York, Singapore**
- **Regional Financial Centers (RFCs)** - serve their **regional economies** rather than their national economies; eg. **Dubai or Hong Kong**
- **Non-global and non-regional, ordinary international IFSCs** - cater mainly to the **needs of their national economies** rather than their regions or the world.eg. **Paris, Frankfurt, Tokyo and Sydney.**

- **Offshore Financial Centers (OFCs)** - are primarily **tax havens** for wealth management and global tax management rather than providing the fully array of IFS.

Why an IFSC in India?

- An IFSC seeks to bring to India, those types of financial services and transactions that are currently carried on outside India by overseas financial institutions and overseas branches/ subsidiaries of Indian financial institutions.
- The policy objective behind establishing an IFSC in India is **providing a platform** for international financial services to operate from and **to specialize in exports** of high value-added International Financial Services.

Legal provisions for IFSC in India

- Section 18 and Section 55 of India's **Special Economic Zone Act, 2005 provides for the establishment** of an International Financial Services Centre in India within an SEZ in India and **enables the Central Government to regulate IFSC activities.**
- GIFT SEZ Limited has been notified by the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI)** on 18 August 2011 for setting up a sector specific SEZ for multi services at **Gandhinagar, Gujarat.**
- IFSC has been designated for all practical purposes as a '**deemed foreign territory**' which would have the same ecosystem as other offshore locations, but which is physically on Indian soil.
- Any financial institution (or its branch) set up in the IFSC is:
 - 1) treated as a non-resident Indian located outside India,
 - 2) expected to conduct business in such foreign currency and with such entities, whether resident or non-resident, as the Regulatory Authority may determine, and
 - 3) Nothing contained in any other regulations shall apply to a unit located in IFSC, subject to certain provisions.
- For instance, a bank in IFSC is not subject to CRR or SLR stipulations of RBI.
- The Budget 2016-17 announced a competitive tax regime for IFSC with **tax exemptions for a period of 10 years.**
- A wide range of participants including the Banks, Insurance companies, Stock Exchanges, Clearing Corporations & Depositories, Brokers, Investment Advisers,

Portfolio Managers, Alternate Investment Funds and Mutual Funds have been permitted to participate in GIFT-IFSC.

Why in News?

- The Lok Sabha passed the **International Financial Services Centres (IFSC) Authority Bill, 2019** which provides for the establishment of **an authority to develop and regulate the financial services market.**

News in Detail

- The unified authority would act as a **single window of regulation.**
- All the laws of land, including the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, would apply in an IFSC and would be audited by the CVC and the CAG.
- Currently, the banking, capital markets and insurance sectors in IFSC are regulated by multiple regulators — the RBI, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI).
- The Bill seeks to amend 14 Acts, including the SEBI Act, the IRDA Act and the PFRDA Act.

3) Proposal to make amendments in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2016

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2016

- It provides for a time-bound process to resolve insolvency.
- Insolvency is a situation where individuals or companies are unable to repay their outstanding debt.
- When a default in repayment occurs, creditors gain control over debtor's assets and must take decisions to resolve insolvency within a 330-day period.
- To ensure an uninterrupted resolution process, the Code also provides immunity to debtors from resolution claims of creditors during this period.
- For more details about IBC, please refer *Officers' Pulse Issue No. 23*

Why in News?

- The Union Cabinet approved the proposal to make amendments in the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) 2016, through the

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Second Amendment) Bill, 2019.

News in Detail

- The amendments aim to remove bottlenecks, streamline the corporate insolvency resolution process, and protect the last mile funding in order to boost investment in financially distressed sectors.
- This also includes a provision to ring-fence successful resolution applicants from criminal proceedings with regard to offences committed by previous promoters of a company.
- The amended Act would also ensure that the substratum of the business of a corporate debtor is not lost. The licences, permits, concessions, clearances etc. cannot be terminated or suspended or not renewed during the moratorium period.

4) Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme for assets of NBFCs

What are NBFCs?

- 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 instalments by way of contributions or in any other manner, is also a non-banking financial company (Residuary non-banking company).
- NBFCs lend and make investments and hence their activities are akin to that of banks; however there are a few differences as given below:
- NBFCs **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.
- For more details about IBC, please refer *Officers' Pulse Issue No. 22*

Why in News?

- The Cabinet approved the 'Partial Credit Guarantee Scheme' for the **purchase of high-rated pooled assets** from financially sound non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) and housing finance companies (HFCs) **by public sector banks.**

News in Detail

- The amount of overall guarantee will be limited to the first loss of up to 10% of fair value of assets being purchased by the banks under the Scheme, or Rs. 10,000 crore, whichever is lower.
- The window for one-time partial credit guarantee offered by the government will remain open till June 30, 2020 or till such date by which Rs. 1,00,000 crore assets get purchased by the banks, whichever is earlier.
- The scheme would cover NBFCs/HFCs that may have slipped into SMA-0 category during the one year period prior to August 1, 2018, and asset pools rated “BBB+” or higher.
- **SMA-0** accounts are the **special mention accounts (SMA)** against which the principal or interest or any other amount wholly or partially is **overdue between 1-30 days**.

5) India Infrastructure Finance Company Ltd (IIFCL)

○ About IIFCL

- IIFCL is a **wholly-owned Government of India Company** set up in **2006** to provide **long-term financial assistance** to viable infrastructure projects through the **Scheme for Financing Viable Infrastructure Projects** through a Special Purpose Vehicle called India Infrastructure Finance Company Ltd (IIFCL), broadly referred to as SIFTI.
- The sectors eligible for financial assistance from IIFCL are as per the Harmonized list of Infrastructure Sub-Sectors as approved by the Government and as amended from time to time.
- These broadly include transportation, energy, water, and sanitation, and communication, social and commercial infrastructure.
- IIFCL has been registered as a NBFC-ND-IFC (Non-deposit taking NBFC) with RBI since September 2013.
- **Why in News?**
- The Union Cabinet approved the proposal for providing **additional equity support** to India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited to the tune of Rs. 5,300 crore in financial year 2019-20 and Rs. 10,000 crore in financial year 2020-21.

6) Bharat Bond ETF opens for subscription

About New Fund Offer (NFO)

- A new fund offer (NFO) is the **first time subscription offer** for a new scheme launched by the asset management companies (AMCs).
- A new fund offer is launched in the market to raise capital from the public in order to buy securities like shares, govt. bonds etc. from the market.
- NFO is **similar to the initial public offer (IPO)** with an attempt to raise capital from the market.
- NFOs are offered for a stipulated period. This means that the investors opting to invest in these schemes at the offer price can do so in this stipulated period only.
- After the NFO period, investors can take exposure in these funds only at the prevailing NAV (net asset value).

Why in News?

- The public issue of **Bharat Bond ETF**, the **country's first corporate bond exchange-traded fund** aimed at retail investors, opened for subscription.

News in Detail

- The ETF will invest **only in AAA-rated bonds of public sector companies**.
- The ETF is an initiative of the Government of India through the **Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM)**.
- It will be managed by Edelweiss Asset Management Company.
- Through the ETF, Edelweiss Mutual Fund proposes to raise an initial amount of Rs. 3,000 crore with a green shoe option of Rs. 2,000 crore in the 3-year maturity period (2023).
- For more details about IBC, please refer *Officers' Pulse Issue No. 26*

About Edelweiss Asset Management Company

- Edelweiss Asset Management Limited is a **Non-govt company**, incorporated on 23 Aug, 2007.
- It's a public unlisted company and is classified as 'company limited by shares'.

About Greenshoe Option

- A greenshoe option is an **over-allotment option**.

- In the context of an initial public offering (IPO), it is a provision in an underwriting agreement that grants the underwriter the right to sell investors more shares than initially planned by the issuer if the demand for a security issue proves higher than expected.

- The **underwriting agreement** may be considered the contract between a corporation issuing a new securities issue, and the underwriting group (or underwriter) that agrees to purchase and resell the issue for a profit.

International Relations

1) World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)

About WADA

- The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) was established in **1999** based on the **Lausanne Declaration on Doping in Sport**, which was an outcome of **First World Conference on Doping in Sport held in Lausanne, Switzerland**.
- Since 2002, the organization's headquarters have been located in **Montreal, Quebec, Canada**.
- It is an **international independent agency** composed and funded equally by the sport movement and governments of the world to promote and coordinate the fight against doping in sport internationally.
- Its key activities include scientific research, education, development of anti-doping capacities, and monitoring of the **World Anti-Doping Code (Code)** – the document harmonizing anti-doping policies in all sports and all countries.

Why in News?

- **Russia was banned** from the world's top sporting events for four years by WADA for tampering with doping tests.

News in Detail

- WADA confirmed the Russian national team could not take part in the **2022 World Cup soccer in Qatar** under the Russian flag and could participate only as neutrals.
- The ban also means Russian sportsmen and sportswomen will not be able to perform at the **2020 Tokyo Olympics** under their own flag and national anthem.
- The sanctions also **include a four-year ban on Russia hosting major sporting events**.
- However, WADA leaves the door open for clean Russian athletes to compete at big international events without their flag or anthem for the next four years.

2) Hong Kong International Convention, 2009

About the Convention

- The **International Maritime Organization (IMO)** adopted the **Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe**

and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships in 2009.

- This is aimed at ensuring that ships being recycled after reaching the end of their operational lives do not pose any unnecessary risks to human health, safety and the environment.
- It was developed with input from IMO Member States and non governmental organizations, and in co-operation with the International Labour Organization and the Parties to the Basel Convention.
- It intends to **address all the issues around ship recycling**, including the fact that ships sold for scrapping may contain environmentally hazardous substances such as **asbestos, heavy metals, hydrocarbons, ozone depleting substances** and others.
- The Convention covers the design, construction, operation and maintenance of ships to ensure they can be recycled safely and in an environment-friendly way at the end of their lives.
- Under the Convention, ships sent for recycling are required to carry an **inventory of all hazardous materials on board**.
- Ship recycling facilities are required to provide a "**Ship Recycling Plan**", specifying how each ship will be recycled, based on its particular characteristics and its inventory of hazardous materials.
- The treaty will enter into force 24 months after three separate criteria have been met. It must be ratified by 15 States - but these States must represent 40% of world merchant shipping by gross tonnage, and a combined maximum annual ship recycling volume (during the preceding 10 years) of not less than 3% of their combined gross tonnage.
- Hong Kong Convention 2009 is **not yet in force**.

Ship recycling industry in India

- The industry being **largely concentrated in South Asia**, India remains the leading market for ship-wrecking globally, with the Alang-Sosiya ship breaking yard in Gujarat handling around 450 ships every year.

- As per data available for 2018, India handles around five million gross tonnage (MnGT) annually, which is around **25% share of the world's ship recycling industry**.
- The government plans to nearly double this by 2024, at around nine MnGT.

India and the Convention

- India's accession will help provide a boost to the ship-wrecking industry in India.
- Recently, the cabinet committee on economic affairs (CCEA) approved India's accession to the Hong Kong Convention.
- With India's accession, the number of States required has now been reached, but further tonnage and recycling volumes are needed before the convention can enter into force.
- The top five ship recycling countries in the world, between them accounting for more than 98% of all ship recycling by gross tonnage, are **Bangladesh, China, India, Pakistan** and **Turkey** (of these, two are now Parties to the Hong Kong Convention - India and Turkey).

Why in News?

- Parliament passed the **Recycling of Ships Bill, 2019** that provides for the **regulated recycling of ships**, which is in accordance with the Hong Kong Convention.

3) Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act

About Uyghur issue

- The Xinjiang province, Officially known as the **Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region**, in China's far west has had a long history of discord between the authorities and the indigenous ethnic Uighur population.

Who lives in Xinjiang?

- The **largest of China's administrative regions**, Xinjiang borders eight countries - Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, **Pakistan** and **India** - and until recently its population was mostly Uighur.
- Most Uighurs are **Muslim** and Islam is an important part of their life and identity.
- Their language is related to **Turkish**, and they regard themselves as culturally and ethnically close to Central Asian nations.
- The region's economy has largely revolved around agriculture and trade, with towns such as Kashgar thriving as hubs along the famous Silk Road.



RICH CLABAUGH/STAFF

- But development has brought new residents. In the 2000 census, Han Chinese made up 40% of the population, as well as large numbers of troops stationed in the region and unknown numbers of unregistered migrants.

What is at the heart of the unrest in Xinjiang?

- Some Uighurs living there refer to the region as **East Turkestan** and argue that it ought to be independent from China.
- There has been open calls for separation of Xinjiang from China since 1990s.
- Since then, China suppressed any dissent from Uyghur and began placing restrictions on them.
- Ethnic tensions caused by economic and cultural factors are considered the root cause of the recent violence.
- Major development projects have brought prosperity to Xinjiang's big cities, attracting young and technically qualified **Han Chinese** from eastern provinces.
- The Han Chinese are said to be given the best jobs and the majority do well economically, something that has fuelled resentment among Uighurs.
- Activists say Uighur commercial and cultural activities have been gradually curtailed by the Chinese state.
- There are complaints of **severe restrictions on Islam**, with fewer mosques and strict control over religious schools.

Recent developments

- The Chinese government has reportedly detained more than a million Muslims in reeducation camps.
- Most of the people who have been arbitrarily detained are Uighur.
- Human rights organizations, UN officials, and many foreign governments are urging China to stop the crackdown.
- But Chinese officials maintain that what they call vocational training centers do not infringe on Uighurs' human rights.
- They have refused to share information about the detention centers, and prevented journalists and foreign investigators from examining them.
- Chinese officials are concerned that Uighurs hold extremist and separatist ideas, and they view the camps as a way of eliminating threats to China's territorial integrity, government, and population.
- The Chinese government has come to characterize any expression of Islam in Xinjiang as extremist, a reaction to past independence movements and occasional outbursts of violence.
- The government has blamed terrorist attacks on the **East Turkestan Islamic Movement**, a separatist group founded by militant Uighurs, in recent decades.

Why in News?

- The **United States** Congress has passed the **Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act**, which among other things, proposes that America redirects resources to address the mass internment of over 1,000,000 Uyghurs and other Muslim ethnic minorities in China.

News in Detail

- The move by the House of Representatives is expected to generate a sharp reaction from China.
- The Act, which calls for an end to the detaining, torture and harassment of the Uyghur communities in China, was passed by the Senate earlier.
- The bill directs various US government bodies to prepare reports on China's treatment of Uyghurs.

4) Paris summit - Russia and Ukraine

About Ukraine crisis

- Thousands have been killed and one million have fled their homes since pro-Russian militias in eastern Ukraine launched a bid

for independence in 2014— kicking off a conflict that deepened Russia's estrangement from the West.

- The separatists seized control of the **Donetsk** and **Luhansk** regions shortly after Russia's annexation of the Ukrainian peninsula of **Crimea**.



Background

- The crisis in Ukraine began with protests in the capital city of Kiev in November 2013 against the then Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich's decision to reject a deal for greater economic integration with the European Union.
- A violent crackdown by state security forces unintentionally drew an even greater number of protesters and escalated the conflict.
- In March 2014, Russian troops took control of Ukraine's Crimean region, before formally annexing the peninsula after Crimean people voted to join the Russian Federation in a disputed local referendum.
- Russian President Vladimir Putin cited the need to protect the rights of Russian citizens and Russian speakers in Crimea and southeast Ukraine.
- The crisis heightened ethnic divisions, and two months later pro-Russian separatists in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of eastern Ukraine held a referendum to declare independence from Ukraine.

Why in News?

- A landmark **summit in Paris** on ending the war in the east of Ukraine agreed to implement a full ceasefire and proceed with

a new withdrawal of forces from conflict zones by March 2020.

- The deal was signed between **Russian** leader Vladimir Putin and **Ukrainian** counterpart Volodymyr Zelensky, mediated by by **French** President Emmanuel Macron and **German** Chancellor Angela Merkel.

5) Bougainville

About Bougainville

- Bougainville is an **autonomous region in Papua New Guinea**, consisting of **Bougainville Island, Buka Island**, and a number of outlying islands and atolls.
- Bougainville, with a strong provincial identity, differs from the tribal factions of other regions of Papua New Guinea.
- Since **French explorer** Louis de Bougainville arrived on this **Melanesian archipelago** more than two hundred years ago, control of this isles has passed from Germany to Australia to Japan to the United Nations and to Papua New Guinea.

Why in News?

- The people of Bougainville voted overwhelmingly for independence from **Papua New Guinea** in a referendum — a major step toward the troubled isles becoming the world's newest nation.
- Around 98% of voters — had backed independence with just 3,043 supporting the option of remaining part of Papua New Guinea with more autonomy.



Background

- The historic vote concludes a decades-long peace process and a long recovery from a brutal civil war between Bougainville rebels, Papua New Guinea security forces and foreign mercenaries that ended in 1998 and left up to 20,000 people dead — 10% of the population.
- The **1988-1998 civil war** had its roots in a struggle over revenues from the now-shuttered **Panguna copper mine**, which at one point accounted for more than 40 percent of Papua New Guinea's exports.
- The mine is estimated to still hold more than five million tonnes of copper and 19 million ounces of gold -- worth billions of dollars at current market prices.

SCIENCE and TECHNOLOGY

1) RISAT-2BR1

About RISAT

- RISAT (**Radar Imaging Satellite**) is a series of Indian radar imaging reconnaissance satellites built by ISRO.
- They provide all-weather surveillance using synthetic aperture radars (SAR).
- The RISAT series are the **first all-weather earth observation satellites from ISRO**.
- Previous Indian observation satellites relied primarily on optical and spectral sensors which were hampered by cloud cover.

Why in News?

- India's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle, in its **fiftieth flight (PSLV-C48)**, successfully launched RISAT-2BR1, an earth observation satellite, along with nine commercial satellites of Israel, Italy, Japan and USA from **Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR, Sriharikota**.

Other facts

- PSLV-C48 was the **75th launch vehicle mission from SDSC SHAR, Sriharikota**.
- This is the 2nd flight of PSLV in '**QL' configuration** (with **4 solid strap-on motors**).
- The other nine commercial satellites were launched under commercial arrangement with **NewSpace India Limited (NSIL)**, the commercial arm of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- The PSLV has failed only twice in its history — the maiden flight of the PSLV D1 in September 1993 and the PSLV C-39 in August 2017.

About RISAT-2BR1

- RISAT-2BR1 is a radar imaging earth observation satellite weighing about 628 kg.
- It was injected into a **low earth orbit (LEO)** of 576 km.
- The satellite will provide services in the field of **Agriculture, Forestry and Disaster Management**.
- The mission life of RISAT-2BR1 is **5 years**.

2) IBM GRAF - weather forecast system

Why in News?

- International technology company IBM plans to make a high-resolution weather forecast model that will also rely on user-generated data to improve the accuracy of forecasts available in India.

About IBM GRAF

- IBM GRAF, as the forecast system is called, can generate forecasts at a **resolution of 3 kilometres**.
- This is a significantly higher resolution than the 12-kilometre models used by the India Meteorological Department to generate forecasts.
- These weather forecast techniques rely on **dynamic modelling** and collect a trove of atmospheric and ocean data, crunch it in supercomputers and generate forecasts over desired time-frames — three days, weekly or fortnightly.
- For its forecasts, IBM relies on a global network of sensors — automatic weather station, data bouys (a floating device in oceans) and barometric pressure data from cellphones of users who've downloaded the application.

Advantages

- IBM has claimed that their forecasts are **30% more accurate** than those generated by 12-km resolution models,
- Weather forecasts will be **available to individuals for free download** and can be used by farmers.
- The forecast engine will also be used to provide **custom forecasts** for energy companies, consumer brands, insurance businesses and satellite imagery analysts.

3) Typbar TCV - Bharat Biotech's typhoid vaccine offers 82% protection

About Typhoid

- Typhoid fever is caused by the highly contagious **Salmonella Typhi bacteria**.
- Nearly 11 million fall sick due to typhoid and about 1,17,000 deaths are reported each year.
- The bacteria spread through **contaminated food or water**.
- According to SAGE, in high-incidence settings, a large proportion of severe

typhoid fever cases occur in children aged below two years.

- While typhoid bacteria **can be treated with antibiotics**, the microbes have developed resistance against multiple antibiotics.
- Multi-drug resistant typhoid bacteria are seen in south Asia including India.

Why in News?

- A typhoid vaccine (**Typbar TCV**) developed by the **Hyderabad-based Bharat Biotech** has shown **81.6% efficacy** in preventing typhoid fever at 12 months in a Phase-III clinical trial.

News in Detail

- A single dose of the vaccine was found to be effective in preventing typhoid in children aged nine months to 16 years.
- The vaccine confers protection two-three weeks after vaccination.
- The Typbar TCV vaccine was **recommended by WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (WHO-SAGE)** in December 2017.
- WHO **prequalified** the vaccine in January 2018.

About Typbar TCV vaccine

- The Typbar TCV typhoid vaccine tested in Nepal is a **conjugate vaccine**.
- Conjugate vaccine is one in which the antigen (which is a polysaccharide in this case) is chemically linked to a carrier protein.
- Two other typhoid vaccines — **polysaccharide typhoid vaccine** and **live, weakened typhoid vaccine** — are already used commercially.
- But the efficacy of the vaccines to protect against typhoid is lower than the conjugate vaccine that was tested in Nepal.
- More importantly, the **conjugate vaccine can be given to babies as young as six months**, while the other two vaccines cannot be given to children below two years of age.
- **Pakistan** is the **first country** to introduce the typhoid conjugate vaccine as part of its **national immunisation programme**.
- Bharat Biotech has been supplying the typhoid conjugate vaccine to Pakistan since 2017.

PIB ANALYSIS

1) North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS).

About the NESIDS:

- The **broad objective** of the North East Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS) is to ensure focused development of the North East Region by providing financial assistance for projects of:
 1. **Physical infrastructure relating to water supply, power and connectivity to enhance tourism.**
 2. **Social sector for the creation of infrastructure in the areas of primary and secondary sectors of education and health.**
- It is a central sector scheme and under the scheme, **100% central funding is provided.**
- The NESIDS will accord focus on exploitation of the huge tourism potential of the area by way of strengthening related infrastructure and will also give emphasis on the creation of infrastructure of social sectors like health and education.
- The NESIDS will be implemented in **3 years from 2017-18 to 2019-20**. The funds are released in two installments of 40% and 60%.

Why in News?

- This information was provided by the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Development of North-Eastern Region (DoNER) regarding various infrastructure projects in North East.

2) National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA)

Need of NFRA:

- The need for establishing NFRA has arisen on account of the need felt across various jurisdictions in the world, in the wake of accounting scams, to establish independent regulators, independent from those it regulates, for enforcement of auditing standards and ensuring the quality of audits to strengthen the independence of audit firms, quality of audits and, therefore, enhance investor and public

confidence in financial disclosures of companies.

Functions of the NFRA:

- Recommend accounting and auditing policies and standards to be adopted by companies for approval by the Central Government.
- Monitor and enforce compliance with accounting standards and auditing standards.
- Oversee the quality of service of the professions associated with ensuring compliance with such standards and suggest measures for improvement in the quality of service.
- Perform such other functions and duties as may be necessary or incidental to the aforesaid functions and duties.

NFRA's jurisdiction:

- The NFRA will oversee the quality of service and undertake investigation of the auditors of listed entities; unlisted entities with paid-up capital of not less than ₹500 crore or annual turnover of over ₹1,000 crore or those having aggregate loans, debentures or deposits of not less than ₹500 crore as of March 31 of the preceding financial year.
- The NFRA will also have oversight over auditors of banks, insurers, electricity firms and also those body corporates referred to it by the Centre.
- It will investigate matters, either suo moto or on a reference made to it by the Central Government, of professional misconduct by chartered accountants (CA) or CA firms, impose a penalty and debar the CA or CA firm for up to 10 years.

Why in News?

- The National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA) has issued Audit Quality Review (AQR) report of the statutory audit for the year 2017-18 of IL&FS Financial Services Limited (IFIN).

3) Universal Health Coverage Day

About the Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Day:

- The Universal Health Coverage Day on 12 December is the annual rallying point for the growing movement for health for all.

- It marks the anniversary of the United Nations' historic and unanimous endorsement of universal health coverage in 2012.
- In 2014, the Universal Health Coverage Coalition started to celebrate 12 December as UHC Day, to commemorate the date on which the UN General Assembly officially recognised the importance of UHC.
- UHC Day aims to raise awareness of the need for strong and resilient health systems and universal health coverage.
- The theme of UHC Day 2019 is 'Keep the Promise'.

Why in News?

- The Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare conferred the UHC Awards to best performing Primary Healthcare teams of States and UTs.

4) Infrastructure Investment Trust

News in Detail:

- The Union Cabinet has given its approval to the proposal of the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways authorizing the **National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)** to set up an Infrastructure Investment Trust(s) (InvIT) .
- This will enable the NHAI to monetize completed national highways that have a toll collection track record of at least one year and the NHAI reserves the right to levy toll on the identified highway.

What are Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvITs)?

- An Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvITs) is like a mutual fund, which enables direct investment of small amounts of money from possible individual/institutional investors in infrastructure to earn a small portion of the income as return. InvITs work like mutual funds or real estate investment trusts (REITs) in features. InvITs can be treated as the modified version of REITs designed to suit the specific circumstances of the infrastructure sector.
- And these InvIT as an instrument provides greater flexibility to investors and is expected to create the following opportunities:

- Generation of specialized O&M Concessionaires (Operation & Maintenance).
- Attract patient capital (for say 20-30 years) to the Indian highway market, as these investors are averse to construction risk and are interested in investment in assets which provide long-term stable returns.
- Retail domestic savings and corpus of special institutions (such as mutual funds, PFRDA, etc.) to be invested in infrastructure sector through InvIT.

About the NHAI:

- The National Highways Authority of India was set up by an act of Parliament, the **NHAI Act, 1988**. It develops, maintains and manages the national highways of India.
- The NHAI also collects fees on national highways, regulates and controls the plying of vehicles on the highways for its proper management. It functions under the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, Government of India.
- The total length of NH (including expressways) in the country at present is 1,32,499 km.
- NHAI is mandated to implement the **National Highways Development Project (NHDP)** which is India's largest ever Highways Project in a phased manner.

Why in News?

- Cabinet authorises NHAI to set up Infrastructure Investment Trust and monetize National Highway projects.

5) Government Initiatives to develop a world class research facilities

- Government has taken following initiatives to promote research in the field of science & engineering and to develop world class research facilities.

Prime Minister's Research Fellowship

- The Prime Minister's Research Fellowship (PMRF) scheme is aimed at attracting the talent pool of the country to doctoral (Ph.D.) programmes of Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Indian Institutes of Science Education & Research (IISERs), Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) and Central Universities .
- Under this scheme, meritorious students of IITs, IIITs, NITs and IISERs, after completing their B.Tech programme can straightaway

get admission in PhD programme at IITs and IISc.

Junior Research Fellow (JRF)/Senior Research Fellow (SRF)

- Under the scheme of Junior Research Fellow, for research personnel engaged in Research and Development programmes are given emoluments of Rs.31,000/- per month. For Senior Research Fellow (SRF) these emoluments are Rs. 35,000/- per month.

Research Associate

- Depending upon their experience and qualifications, the research associates are given emoluments in three pay levels ranging from Rs. 47000 to Rs. 54000.

National Initiative for Technology Transfer (Establishment of Research Parks)

- The government has accorded approval for the establishment of research parks in the various IITs.

Impacting Research, Innovation and Technology (IMPRINT)

- IMPRINT is a flagship national initiative of the Government, which aims at providing solutions to the most relevant engineering challenges and translating knowledge into viable technology in 10 selected technology domains, viz. health care, energy, sustainable habitat, nano technology hardware, water resources and river systems, advanced materials, Information and communication technology, manufacturing, security and defence, and environmental science and climate change.
- It is a pan IITs and IISc Joint Initiative seeking to develop a roadmap for research.

Institutions of Eminence (IoE)

- In order to empower the Higher Educational Institutions and to help them in becoming world-class teaching and research institutions, the government has recently declared 20 institutions (10 public and 10 Private institutions) as Institutions of Eminence.
- These institutes will emphasise on multi-disciplinary initiatives, high quality research, global best practices and international collaboration.

Why in News?

- The Government has taken many initiatives to promote research in the field of science & engineering and to develop world-class research facilities in India.

6) Atal Bhujal Yojana

About Atal Bhujal Yojana

- The Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABHY) is a Central Sector Scheme worth Rs.6,000 crore for sustainable management of groundwater with community participation.
- It envisages people's participation through the formation of 'Water User Associations', water budgeting, preparation & implementation of Gram-panchayat-wise water security plans, etc.
- It is being implemented by **the Ministry of Jal Shakti**. The scheme is being funded by the Government of India and the **World Bank on 50:50 basis**.
- The identified over-exploited and water-stressed areas for the implementation of the scheme are **Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh**.
- The States have been selected according to the degree of groundwater exploitation and degradation, established legal and regulatory instruments, institutional readiness, and experience in implementing initiatives related to groundwater management.

Why in News?

- The World Bank has approved Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABHY), a Rs.6,000 Crore Central Sector Scheme, for sustainable management of ground water resources with community participation.

7) Mullaperiyar Dam

Where is it located?

- Mullaperiyar dam is a portmanteau of Mullaiyar and Periyar as the dam is located after the confluence of the **Mullaiyar and Periyar rivers**.
- Mullaperiyar also known as Periyar and Mullaiperiyar, **the west flowing perennial river originates from the Sivagiri group of hills in the Western Ghats** traversing through Idukki and Ernakulam districts of Kerala and joins the **Arabian Sea**.
- The dam is located in Kerala on the river Periyar, but is operated and maintained by **Tamil Nadu state**.
- Dam was given to British-ruled Madras Presidency on a 999-year lease in 1886. The agreement was renewed in 1970.
- Tamil Nadu was given rights to the land and the water from the dam as well as the

authority to develop hydro-power projects at the site, and Kerala would receive rent in return.

Why in News?

- As per directions of the Supreme Court in a 2014 judgement, the Ministry of Jal Shakti has constituted a three member Supervisory Committee with a representative from the Central Water Commission (Chairman of the committee) and one representative each from Kerala and Tamil Nadu.

8) Hill Area Development Programme (HADP)

About the HADP:

- Hill Area Development Programme (HADP) is a pilot project launched for the hill district of Tamenglong in Manipur with an outlay of Rs.90 crore for a period of two years (2018-19 and 2019-20).
- As per North Eastern Region District Infrastructure Index, prepared by the Ministry of Development of North-Eastern Region (DoNER) in 2009, districts of Tamenglong, Chandel & Churachandpur in Manipur are ranked among the lowest in NER (North-Eastern Region).
- The pilot programme is aimed at bringing them on par with the rest of the districts in the region.

About the District Infrastructure Index (DII):

- The Ministry of DoNER has prepared the DII in order to reduce intra-regional disparity and have better targeting of schemes and projects in the North Eastern States.
- The DII is based on **seven broad indicators** — transport facilities in terms of road density and road quality, energy, water supply, education, health facilities, communication infrastructure and banking facilities.

Why in News?

- The HADP was launched for a period of two years (2018-19 and 2019-20).

9) National Energy Conservation Day

About:

- The National Energy Conservation Day is organized every year on 14th December every year by **Bureau of Energy Efficiency**

(**BEE**), under the Ministry of Power, with an aim to showcase India's achievements in energy efficiency and conservation, while working for its ambition of holistic development as part of the nation's overall effort towards climate change mitigation.

- In order to recognise the efforts of industry and other establishments towards promoting energy efficiency, on this Day, **Ministry of Power** organizes National Energy Conservation Awards event every year.
- The National Energy Conservation Awards Programme recognizes the energy efficiency achievements in 56 sub sectors across industry, establishments and institutions.

About Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE):

- BEE is a statutory body under **Ministry of Power** which is mandated to implement policy and programmes in the area of energy efficiency and conservation.
- The objective of such initiatives is to reduce energy intensity in our country by optimizing energy demand and reduce emissions of greenhouse gases (GHG) which are responsible for global warming and climate change.

Why in News?

- National Energy Conservation Day was celebrated on 14th December 2019

10) National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM)

About NCSCM

- The National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM) is established under the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** to undertake studies and research in the area of Coastal Zone Management including coastal resources and environment.

The aims and Objectives of the Centre are:

- Strive for being a World Class Knowledge Institution related to coastal zones, environment, resources and processes,
- To promote integrated and sustainable management of the coastal and marine areas in India for the benefit and wellbeing of the traditional coastal and island communities, and

- Advice the Union and State Governments and other associated stakeholder(s) on policy, and scientific matters related to Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM).

Roles and Responsibilities:

- It has various research divisions including, Geospatial Sciences, Remote Sensing and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Coastal environmental impact assessment, Conservation of Coastal & Marine Resources, etc.
- Survey of India and NCSCM have mapped the Hazard Line for the entire coast of India,

which includes vulnerability mapping of flood, erosion and sea-level rise.

- It also advises the Union and State Governments and other associated stakeholders on policy, and scientific matters related to Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM).

Why in News?

- Recently the information was provided by Minister of State, Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change in written reply to a question in Lok Sabha.

News in Depth

AIR NEWS

1) Marginal Cost of Funds Based Lending Rate (MCLR)

About MCLR :

- **MCLR is the minimum interest rate that a bank can lend at.** The actual lending rates for loans of different categories and tenors are determined by adding the components of spread to MCLR.
- MCLR is a **tenor-linked internal benchmark**, which means the rate is determined internally by the bank depending on the period left for the repayment of a loan.
- **MCLR is calculated based on four components:** the marginal cost of funds, negative carry on account of cash reserve ratio, operating costs and tenor premium.
- The Reserve Bank of India introduced the MCLR methodology for fixing interest rates from **1 April 2016**. It replaced the base rate structure, which had been in place since July 2010.

Why in News?

- State Bank of India (SBI) has announced a reduction in its marginal cost of fund based lending rate (MCLR) by 10 basis points across all one-year products from 8 per cent to 7.90 per cent.

2) 11th Delhi Dialogue and 6th Indian Ocean Dialogue held together

What is Delhi Dialogue?

- Delhi Dialogue is a premier annual track 1.5 event to discuss politico-security, economic and socio-cultural engagement between India and ASEAN.
- It has been held annually since 2009 and political leaders, policy makers, senior officials, diplomats, think tanks and academicians from both sides participate in

the discussions pertaining to ASEAN-India relations.

News in Detail:

- For the first time, these two tracks 1.5 dialogues were held consecutively and on similar **Indo-Pacific themes**.
- The theme for this year's **Indian Ocean Dialogue** is "**Indo-Pacific: Re-imagining the Indian Ocean through an Expanded Geography**".
- The theme for this year's **Delhi Dialogue** is "**Advancing Partnership in Indo-Pacific**".
- **Why in News?**
- External Affairs Ministry will host the 6th Indian Ocean Dialogue and Delhi Dialogue XI at the Pravasi Bharatiya Kendra in **New Delhi**.

3) Sustainable Development Cell (SDC)

Role of Sustainable Development Cell (SDC):

- The sustainable development cell (SDC) will comprise expert individuals and organisations to advise and plan on issues of land amelioration and afforestation, air, water and noise pollution management, mine water and overburden management, planning and monitoring of mine closure plans etc.
- "The SDC will adopt a systemic approach, starting from the collection and analysis of data, presentation of information, planning based on information by domain experts, adoption of best practices, consultations, innovative thinking, site-specific approaches, knowledge sharing and dissemination," the ministry statement said.
- More specifically, through GIS mapping and data analysis, the cell will help coal companies comply with their environmental mandate, and identify areas for plantation as well as the species that can

be planted, in keeping with improving carbon sinks for better climate change management.

- It will help companies plan for rehabilitation along with possibilities for creation of townships, agriculture, renewable energy farms etc.
- The cell will also advise companies on pollution mitigation measures, management and treatment of mine pit water for water supply in the adjoining areas.
- Importantly, it will work to make mine closure plans effective and time-bound and monitor the utilisation of mine closure fund and environment budgets of coal companies.

Need for SDC :

- India is looking at increasing coal production to meet the energy requirements of the country, it is imperative that mines are managed well.
- Coal mines are known to be one of the most polluting, as most of them are open-cast mines.

- A recent CAG report found the environmental impact mitigation measures of Coal India wanting over all counts, from air pollution to water, soil and land management etc.

- Also, transportation of coal is also known to be polluting due to lack of preventive measures being followed by the companies and transport operators.

- “Having a dedicated cell to look at compliance to environmental obligations might help improve the conditions, if the expertise is developed well and the mandate enforced properly.

Why in News?

- Coal Ministry has decided to establish a Sustainable Development Cell, SDC, to promote environmentally sustainable coal mining in the country. It will address environmental concerns during the decommissioning or closure of mines.

Hindu Editorial Analysis

1) Not many lessons learnt from water planning failures

Context:

- In this article the author says that **in the absence of scientific planning and implementation, measures like Jal Shakti Abhiyan may not be successful.**

Jal Shakti Abhiyan:

- Jal Shakti Abhiyan is a campaign for **water conservation and water security.**
- It is a collaborative effort of various ministries of the Government of India and state governments, being coordinated by the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS) that comes under the **Jal Shakti Ministry.**
- The campaign ran **through citizen participation** during the monsoon season, from **1st July, 2019 to 15th September, 2019.** An additional Phase 2 ran from **1st October, 2019 to 30th November, 2019** for States receiving the North East retreating monsoons.
- The focus of the campaign will be on **water stressed districts and blocks.** The teams of officers from the central government visited and worked with district administration in 1592 water stressed blocks in 256 districts, to ensure five important water conservation interventions.
- The five important **water conservation interventions** are :
 - Water conservation and rainwater harvesting,
 - Renovation of traditional and other water bodies/tanks,
 - Reuse of water and recharging of structures,
 - Watershed development and
 - Intensive afforestation.

Shortcomings of Jal Shakti Abhiyan:

No new intervention:

- The campaign did **not create any new intervention** on its own rather it is only aimed to make **water conservation a 'people's movement'** through ongoing schemes like the MGNREGA and other government programmes.

Modelled on success stories

- The JSA is **partly modelled and driven by some sporadic success stories** such as NGO Tarun Bharat Sangh's experiment in Alwar, Rajasthan and Anna Hazare-led efforts in Ralegan Siddhi, Maharashtra.
- These projects primarily involved building tanks and ponds to capture rainwater and building recharge wells to recharge groundwater.
- It is unclear whether they were based on reference to watershed management or groundwater prospect maps.
- **(Watershed management:** Watershed management is an **attempt to halt land degradation** and a holistic process for getting maximum production out of land. Watershed management implies **rational utilisation of land and water resources** for optimum and sustained production, with the minimum of hazard to natural resources.)

Contrary to principle of water management:

- Contrary to this principle of water management, JSA was planned **based on the boundary of the districts**, and to be carried out under the overall supervision of a bureaucrat.
- This resulted in the division of basins/aquifers into multiple units that followed multiple policies.
- There was no data on basin-wise rainfall, no analysis of run-off and groundwater maps were rarely used.
- **(Principle of water management:** Water planning should be based on hydrological units, namely river basins. And, political and administrative boundaries of districts rarely coincide with the hydrological boundaries or aquifer boundaries)

Ignoring water stressed basins facing closure:

- The JSA also fundamentally **ignored the fact** that most of India's water-stressed basins, particularly those in the peninsular regions, are facing closure, with the demand exceeding supply. Hence, groundwater recharge happened at the cost of surface water and vice versa.

JSA Portal failure to display all data

- JSA's portal displays impressive data, images and statistics. For example, it claims that there are around 10 million ongoing and completed water conservation structures; 7.6 million recharge structures.
- But the data displayed on JSA portal **do not speak** anything about the **pre-JSA water levels, the monthly water levels and impact of monsoon** on the water levels across the 255 districts with critical and over-exploited blocks.

No parameter to measure outcome

- There is no parameter to measure the outcome of such a mission-mode campaign.

Facile assumptions

- Though the aim and intent of JSA are noble, the assumptions are distorted.
- JSA's move to reach out to poor people and farmers, asking them to 'save water', appears hypocritical, particularly when district administrations blatantly allow the sewage generated from towns and cities to pollute village water sources such as tanks, ponds and wells.
- It **assumes** that common people in rural areas are ignorant and prone to wasting water; on the contrary, they are the ones who first bear the brunt of any water crisis. The per capita water allocation to those living in rural areas is 55 litres, whereas the same for urban areas like Delhi and Bengaluru is 135-150 litres.

Why JSA like measures, difficult to provide long term solutions?

- Most of the farm bunds built with soil can **collapse within one monsoon season** due to rains and/or trespassing by farm vehicles, animals and humans.
- There are issues like **lack of proper engineering supervision** of these structures, involvement of **multiple departments with less or no coordination**, and **limited funding under MGNERGA** and other schemes.
- There have hardly been many efforts undertaken to dissuade farmers from growing water-intensive crops such as paddy, sugarcane, and banana, when it is widely known that agriculture consumes 80% of freshwater.

2) Strength in numbers: On judge vacancies

Context:

- In this article the author says that a flawed collegium system is no reason to hold back appointments to the judiciary.

Memorandum of procedure for appointment of supreme court judges:

- The Chief Justice of India and the Judges of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President under clause (2) of Article 124 of the Constitution.

CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA :

- Appointment to the office of the Chief Justice of India should be of the seniormost Judge of the Supreme Court considered fit to hold the office.
- The Union Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs would, at the appropriate time, seek the recommendation of the outgoing Chief Justice of India for the appointment of the next Chief Justice of India.
- Whenever there is any doubt about the fitness of the senior most Judge to hold the office of the Chief Justice of India, consultation with other Judges as envisaged in Article 124 (2) of the Constitution would be made for appointment of the next Chief Justice of India.
- After receipt of the recommendation of the Chief Justice of India, the Union Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs will put up the recommendation to the Prime Minister who will advise the President in the matter of appointment.

JUDGES OF THE SUPREME COURT :

- Whenever a vacancy is expected to arise in the office of a Judge of the Supreme Court, the Chief Justice of India will initiate proposal and forward his recommendation to the Union Minister of Law, Justice and Company Affairs to fill up the vacancy.
- The opinion of the Chief Justice of India for appointment of a Judge of the Supreme Court should be formed in consultation with a collegium of the four seniormost puisne Judges of the Supreme Court.
- If the successor Chief Justice of India is not one of the four senior most puisne Judges, he would be made part of the collegium as he should have a hand in selection of Judges who will function during his term as Chief Justice of India.
- The Chief Justice of India would ascertain the views of the seniormost Judge in the Supreme Court, who hails from the High

Court from where the person recommended, comes, but if he does not have any knowledge of his merits and demerits, the next senior most Judge in the Supreme Court from that High Court should be consulted.

- The requirement of consultation with a Judge of the Supreme Court would not be confined to that Judge only who has that High Court as a parent High Court and, therefore, would not exclude Judges who have, on transfer, occupied the office of a Judge or Chief Justice of that High Court.

Time period according to Memorandum Of procedure:

- The court has fixed a time period of six months to appoint as judges at least those whose names the Supreme Court collegium, the High Courts and the Government have agreed upon.
- At each level of the appointment process of judges to the higher judiciary, prior to the names reaching the Prime Minister and President for final approval, there are time periods specified.
- The Memorandum of Procedure states that appointments should be initiated at least six months before a vacancy arises and six weeks of time is then specified for the State to send the recommendation to the Union Law Minister, after which the brief is to be sent to the Supreme Court collegium in four weeks.
- Once the collegium clears the names, the Law Ministry has to put up the recommendation to the Prime Minister in three weeks who will in turn advise the President. Thereafter no time limit is prescribed and the process, seemingly, comes to a standstill.

Current scenario in appointments:

- The Supreme Court of India said recently that 213 names recommended for appointment to various High Courts are pending with the government.
- Data show that 38% of all sanctioned posts for High Court judges are lying vacant.
- High Courts of some States including Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan are functioning at below half their actual capacity.
- **What to be done?**
- It is for the government to disrupt the process through delays, it is for the court to

take an increasingly firm hand to ensure that the collegium system despite flaws, actually functions effectively.

- Vacancies in the higher judiciary threaten every aspect of the justice delivery system and it is imperative for the courts and the government to take necessary action to reduce the number of vacancies.

3) Unequal, unsecular: On Citizenship Amendment Bill

- **(A patently unconstitutional piece of legislation & A law not based on religion)**

Context:

- The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 received President Ram Nath Kovind's nod recently and hence became an Act.

About Citizenship Amendment Act,2019:

- The Act aims to provide citizenship to those who had been forced to seek shelter in India because of religious persecution or fear of persecution in their home countries, primarily Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh.
- This is a drastic shift from the provisions of the Citizenship Act of 1955 that labels a person an "illegal immigrant" if he or she has entered India without travel documents or has overstayed the date specified in the documents.
- It therefore amends the 1955 Act to grant exemptions to illegal migrants from these communities, who reached India on or before December 2014.
- The Act also relaxes the provisions for "Citizenship by naturalisation". The proposed law reduces duration of residency from existing 11 years to just five years for people belonging to the same six religions and three countries.
- According to the Act, the amendment will not be applicable to the tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram or Tripura as included in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution and in the areas covered under The Inner Line, notified under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873.
- It also proposes to incorporate a sub-section (d) to Section 7, providing for cancellation of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) registration where the OCI card-holder has violated any

provision of the Citizenship Act or any other law in force.

Arguments against the Act:

▪ **Country classification**

- The basis of clubbing Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh together and thereby excluding other (neighbouring) countries is unclear.
- A common history is not a ground as Afghanistan was never a part of British India and always a separate country.
- Being a neighbour, geographically, is no ground too as Afghanistan does not share an actual land border with India.
- More importantly countries such as Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar, which share a land border with India, been excluded.
- The reason stated in the 'Statement of Objects and Reasons' of the Act is that these three countries constitutionally provide for a "state religion"; thus, the Bill is to protect "religious minorities" in these theocratic states does not hold good.
- If religious persecution of "religious minorities" in the neighbourhood is the concern, then Sri Lanka, which is Buddhist majority and has a history where Tamil Hindus have been persecuted and Myanmar, which has conducted a genocide against Muslim Rohingyas, many of who have been

forced to take refuge in India, are not been included.

▪ **Focus on certain groups**

- On the classification of individuals, the Act provides benefits to sufferers of only one kind of persecution, i.e. religious persecution.
- If the intent is to protect victims of persecution, there is no logic to restrict it only to religious persecution.
- Restricting the benefits of "religious minority" to six religious groups (Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians) is equally questionable.
- If the objective of Act is to grant citizenship to migrants on the basis of religious persecution in their country of origin, the absence of Ahmadiyas from the list makes things clear.
- **Unconstitutional**
- Article 14 of the Constitution of India, prevents the State from denying any "person" (as opposed to citizen) "equality before the law" or "equal protection of the laws" within the territory of India., The Act will just deny equal protection of laws to similarly placed persons who come to India as "illegal migrants" but in fact grant citizenship to the less deserving at the cost of the more deserving.

RSTV Big Picture

1) Citizenship Amendment Bill

CITIZENSHIP ACT & AMENDMENT

A LOOK AT WHAT THE BILL AIMS TO DO IN VIEW OF THE ACT, AND THE RESPONSE IT RECEIVED

FOR SELECT FEW

Citizenship Amendment Bill seeks to amend the Citizenship Act 1955 in order to make illegal migrants — Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan — eligible for citizenship after six years of stay in India instead of 12 even if they don't possess proper document.

CHANGE IN ELIGIBILITY

Under the Citizenship Act, the applicant must have resided in India during the last 12 months, and for 11 of the last 14 years to get citizenship. The Bill relaxes this 11-year requirement to five years for persons belonging to the 6 religions and 3 countries. It also makes those who entered India till 2014 eligible.

CRITICISM RECEIVED SO FAR

The Bill has come under severe criticism with critics saying that the Bill violates Clause 6 of the Assam Accord, which stipulates “constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards” for the preserving the culture and identity of Assamese people. Critics have also said that the extensive exercise of updating the National Register of Citizens (NRC) will become null and void due to this exercise.

Context:

- The Union Cabinet has cleared the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill that seeks to grant citizenship to non-Muslim refugees from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan if they faced religious persecution there.
- The bill seeks to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955, in order to grant Indian nationality to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians who come to India after facing religious persecution in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Background:

- Over the past weeks, the home ministry has held marathon talks with leaders and stakeholders. A large section of people and organisations in the northeast have opposed the bill.
- Congress, Trinamool Congress, Communist Party of India (Marxist) and a few other political parties have been steadfastly opposing the bill, claiming that citizenship can't be given on the basis of religion.
- The bill to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955, is likely to be introduced in the Parliament in this session.

Key features of the Citizenship Act, 1955:

- In India, the Citizenship Act, 1955 prescribes 5 ways to acquire citizenship i.e, Birth, Descent, Registration, Naturalisation and Incorporation of the territory.
- **Who is a citizen?**
- A person born outside India on or after January 26, 1950, but before December 10, 1992, is a citizen of India if his/her father was a citizen of India at the time of his/her birth.
- **Who is an illegal immigrant?**
- The bill of 1955 bars illegal migrants from acquiring Indian citizenship.
- An illegal migrant is a foreigner who enters the country without valid travel documents, like a passport and visa, or enters with valid documents, but stays beyond the permitted time period.
- **Who is not a citizen?**
- Under Article 9 of the Indian Constitution, a person who voluntarily acquires citizenship of any other country is no longer an Indian citizen.
- From December 3, 2004, onwards, persons born outside of India shall not be considered citizens of India except their birth is

registered at an Indian consulate within 1 year of the date of birth.

- If an adult makes a renunciation of Indian citizenship, then he loses Indian Citizenship.
- **What are the ways of acquiring citizenship?**
- Indian citizenship can be acquired by birth, descent, registration and naturalisation.
- The Citizenship Act, 1955 specifies the condition and procedure for acquisition of Indian citizenship.
- **What is citizenship by naturalisation?**
- Under the Citizenship Act, 1955, one of the requirements for citizenship by naturalisation is that the applicant must have resided in India during the last 12 months, as well as for 11 of the previous 14 years.

Key features of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019:

- The Bill amends the Citizenship Act, 1955, and for the first time, will grant citizenship on the basis of religion to **non-Muslim communities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, who entered India on or before December 31, 2014.**
- Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian. This implies that migrants, who identify themselves with any group or community other than those mentioned here, from the above mentioned countries won't be eligible for citizenship.
- The provisions on citizenship for illegal migrants will not apply to two categories - states protected by the **'Inner Line Permit'** and areas covered under the **Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.**
- The amendment relaxes the requirement for citizenship by naturalization from 11 years to 5 years as a specific condition for applicants belonging to the specified six religions, and the above mentioned three countries.

Benefits to:

- The Citizenship (Amendment) Act grants citizenship to the Hindus, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhist, Jains and Parsis — from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh who had arrived in India before 31 December 2014.
- To put it simply, those belonging to these religions, coming in from the three countries stand a chance to become Indian,

even if they don't have the requisite documents.

- Moreover, they will not be deported for not having documents.
- Also, the requirement for them to stay in India for at least 11 years before applying for Indian citizenship has been reduced to five years.

Reasons to protest:

- There are two kinds of protests that are taking place across India right now, against the Act.
- In the northeast, the protest is against the Act's implementation in their areas.
- Most of them fear that if implemented, the Act will cause a rush of immigrants that may alter their demographic and linguistic uniqueness.
- In the rest of India, like in Kerala, West Bengal and in Delhi, people are protesting against the exclusion of Muslims, alleging it to be against the ethos of the Constitution.

Exclusions to:

- The Citizenship (Amendment) Act does not apply to tribal areas of Tripura, Mizoram, Assam and Meghalaya because of being included in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.
- Also areas that fall under the Inner Limit notified under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873, will also be outside the Act's purview.
- This keeps almost entire Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland out of the ambit of the Act.

Arguments against:

- The bill has been targeted against Muslims which is a violation of Article 14 which guarantees the right to equality.
- Refugees from Tamils of Srilanka and Hindu Rohingya from Myanmar are not covered.
- Concerns of North eastern states which fear of illegal Bangladeshi migrants.
- Difficulty in identifying the illegal migrants.

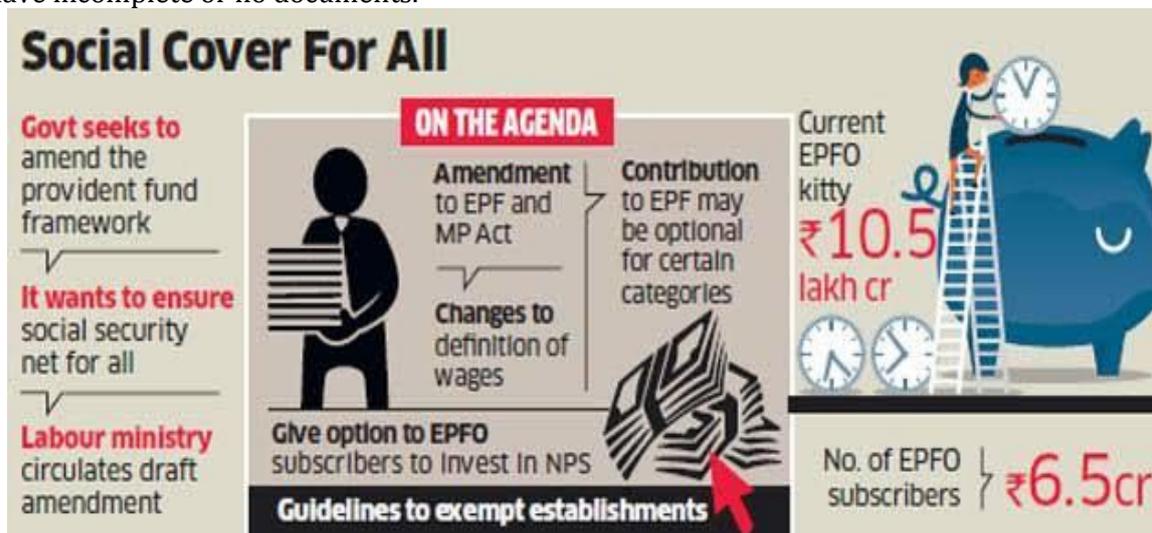
Arguments in favour:

- The government has clarified that Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh are Islamic republics where Muslims are in majority hence they cannot be treated as persecuted minorities. It has assured that the government will examine the application from any other community on a case to case basis.

- This Bill will come as a big boon to all those people who have been the victims of Partition and the subsequent conversion of the three countries into theocratic Islamic republics.
- As a result, many persons belonging to Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities have faced persecution on grounds of religion in those countries.
- Many such persons have fled to India to seek shelter and continued to stay in India even if their travel documents have expired or they have incomplete or no documents.

Conclusion:

- After Independence, not once but twice, India conceded that the minorities in its neighbourhood is its responsibility. First, immediately after Partition and again during the Indira-Mujib Pact in 1972 when India had agreed to absorb over 1.2 million refugees. It is a historical fact that on both occasions, it was only the Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Christians who had come over to Indian side.



2) Social Security Code

Context:

- The Union Cabinet approved the fourth labour code - the Code on Social Security Bill 2019.
- The bill seeks to consolidate the laws relating to social security of workers and subsume eight central laws.

Background:

- Last month, the Cabinet had approved Industrial Relations Code Bill, 2019 (third code), which was later introduced in the Lok Sabha.
- The Code on Wage (first code) has already been approved by Parliament.
- The Code on occupational safety, health and working conditions (second code) has already been introduced in the Lok Sabha and later sent to a standing committee for review.
- This would be pushed for passage in the Budget Session after the committee's report submission in the House.

- The Social Security Code will subsume 8 Central Labour Acts namely Employees Compensation Act, 1923, Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948, Employees Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952, Maternity Benefit Act, 1961, Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972, Cine Workers Welfare Fund Act, 1981, Building and Other Construction Workers Cess Act, 1996, Unorganized Workers Social Security Act, 2008.

Objective of the bill:

- Its objective is to adhere to existing laws and proposes several new initiatives, including universal social security for unorganized workers and health and insurance benefits for GIG workers.

Key features of the Bill:

- The Employee Provident Fund (EPF) and Employee State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) be comprehended under a central body with a corporate-like structure:
 - a. Although it is proposed extending the coverage of pension funds and ESI to

temporary workers, however, did not propose a comprehensive system providing social security coverage for all.

- b. The project simply proposed to amalgamate pension fund, pension, health insurance, maternity benefits, tips and pay laws.

Insurance, PF, life cover for unorganized sector employees:

- The draft code stipulates that “the central government shall from time to time draw up and notify adequate social assistance schemes for unorganized workers on matters relating to life and disability coverage, maternity and health benefits, of old age and any other advantage that the central government may determine.”
- States may also formulate and notify appropriate initiatives for non-unionized workers, including pension fund schemes, work injury benefits, housing, educational programs for their children, old age and funeral assistance.
- Most of India’s labor force is in the informal sector and a move forward is expected, but most of the key initiatives suggested could be the states’ decision with a small contribution from the center.
- There may be social security councils from the unorganized sector at the central and state levels.

Benefits for Gig workers:

- Millions of Indian workers often described as solitary in the workplace may soon get a life, disability, health and maternity insurance, among others, while the union’s government is currently drafting a labor code proposing.

Maternity Benefit:

- According to the draft, subject to the other provisions of this code, every woman will be entitled to it and her employer will be responsible for paying the maternity benefit at the average daily wage rate for the period of her actual absence, ie say period immediately before the day of your birth and any period immediately after that day.
- For the purposes of this paragraph, “the average daily wage is the average woman’s salary payable to her for the days she worked in the three-month period immediately preceding the date of her absence from work”. maternity. , subject to the fixed or revised minimum wage rate in accordance with the Wage Code, 2019.

Existing labour laws that the code will merge:

- The 2019 Social Security Code, once in force will amalgamate eight existing labor laws, including the Employee Compensation Act of 1923; Employees’ Insurance Act, 1948, Pension Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952; Maternity Benefits Act, 1961; The Tip Payment Act, 1972; Act of the Social Fund for Cinema Workers, 1981; Act on the Ceasing of Construction and Other Construction Workers, 1996 and the Social Security of Unorganized Workers Act, 2008.

Flaws in the draft bill:

- It rarely brings together the existing schemes in the organised sector.
- The ambiguities have been avoided over the basic criteria for availing social security benefits.
- No uniform definition of “social security” is there.
- No clear definition for the crucial categories such as workers, wages, principal-agent in a contractual situation; and “organized-unorganized sectors is provided.
- The government has given no contribution to the listed social security measures, even as the Code is clear about employee and employer contributions.

Way forward:

- Existing benefits for unorganized workers have failed to materialize. For example, the 22 years-old Building and Construction Workers’ Cess Fund’s failed to register the construction workers.
- The fund has less than 3 crores workers registered including official estimates (over 5 crores construction workers) and union estimate (over 10 crores construction workers).
- The arising problem is that the draft code merely clubs the relevant sections of the existing statute without specifying the manner in which these issues can be addressed.
- The possible solution seen can be that the government should address the long-pending structural issues and should actually simplify the existing labour laws.
- As part of its labor reform program, the government proposed combining 44 labor laws into four codes. After presenting two codes, on wages, job security, health and

working conditions, the third was not written.

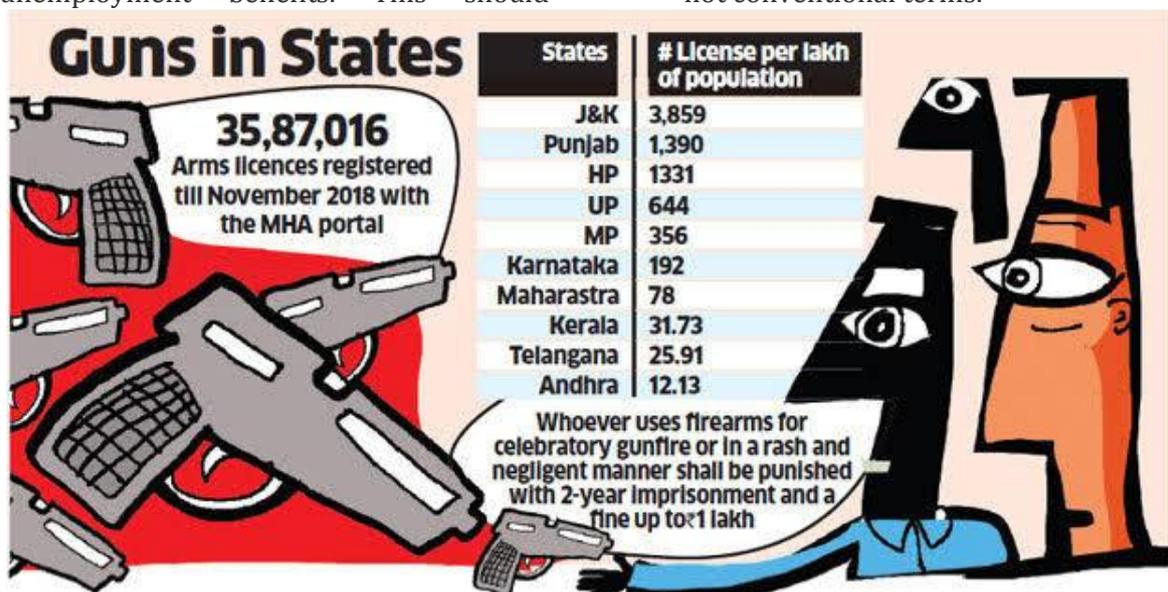
- The code also states that no employer may knowingly employ a woman six weeks after childbirth, miscarriage or medical termination of pregnancy.
- The Maternity Benefits Act, 1961, which was included in the code, had established the six-week restriction for women after childbirth or miscarriage, not to mention medical interruption.

Conclusion:

- Moving on to the conclusion, Social security must include retraining of workers, not just unemployment benefits. This should

help/force workers to buy insurance and save for old age, possibly deducting a fraction of payments received from their bank accounts to insurance/retirement accounts, for example in the national pension system. Social security should help older people deploy their skills to meet demand around the world.

- Comprehensive health care and a quality education system would be linked to social security, which would improve income from working life and improve the income capacity of the next generation. It would be useful to rethink social security in holistic, if not conventional terms.



3) The Arms (Amendment) Bill, 2019

Context:

- Last week, Home Minister Amit Shah introduced the Arms (Amendment) Bill, 2019 in Lok Sabha.
- The Bill seeks to amend the Arms Act, 1959 by reducing the number of firearms allowed per person from the current three to just one.
- It also proposes new categories of offences and an increase in the penalty for certain offences.

Background:

- The proposed capping of firearms has met with resistance from both ruling and opposition leaders amid reports of some MPs, including ex-royals, trying to persuade the government to refer the bill to a House committee.

- In a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Punjab chief minister Captain Amarinder Singh has argued that if some states are keen to reduce the number of weapons, they may be allowed to do so without prejudice to the other states.
- The Punjab government is said to support most of the proposed amendments in the bill but has reservations about restricting the number of firearms a licensee can possess to one.

Key features of the Bill:

- The Bill seeks to enhance the punishment for existing offences like illegal manufacture, sale, transfer, etc.; illegal acquiring, possessing or carrying prohibited arms or prohibited ammunition; and illegal manufacture, sale, transfer, conversion, import, export, etc., of firearms.
- It also proposes to define new offences and prescribing punishment for them, such as for taking away firearms from police or armed forces, involvement in organized crime syndicate, illicit trafficking including smuggled firearms of foreign make or prohibited arms and prohibited ammunition, use of firearms in rash and negligent manner in celebratory gunfire endangering human life, etc.
- Further, the Bill seeks to enhance the period of arms license from three years to five years and also to issue arms license in its electronic form to prevent forgery.

Significance:

- The Amendment assumes significance in recent times as Law enforcement agencies have indicated growing nexus between possession of illegal firearms and commission of criminal offences.
- With the advancement in technology, the fire power and sophistication of illegal firearms have increased significance over the years.
- The trans-border dimensions of illegal arms trafficking are causing threat to internal security and to prevent the usage of illicit firearms so trafficked has also become a prime concern.
- To effectively curb crimes related to or committed by using illegal firearms and to provide effective deterrence against violation of law, there is an urgent need to strengthen the existing legislative framework by making appropriate amendments in the Arms Act, 1959.
- Simultaneously, there is also a requirement for rationalizing and facilitating the licensing procedures for use of firearms by individuals and sports persons.

Issues with the act:

- NIA had assumed jurisdiction over a Scheduled Offence even suo moto whereas the areas of policing and public order lie within the exclusive legislative competence

of the States. So the States have been extremely wary of accepting or cooperating with any agency that encroached on that power.

- The NIA has no officers specialising in cyber surveillance, explosives or tracing chemicals and has been forced to ask companies to decrypt computers recovered at crime scenes.
- It has been repeatedly seen that the functioning of the investigation and prosecution agencies depend on political mandate. This raises serious doubts on the credibility on national institutions.
- It is unclear why the Act does not compel the State government to provide the report to Central government with a much shorter window of time.
- The NIA is not empowered to investigate a number of interstate and trans-national crimes that require a national response. For example, human trafficking, drug trafficking, cybercrime and organised crime are not included in the Schedule of Offences to the NIA Act.

Way forward:

- NIA should cooperate with State governments, irrespective of their political affiliation, and win the long term confidence of ordinary people by providing expeditious justice.
- Independent professionals from outside must be hired to include in the decision making process of deciding whether the NIA should investigate a certain Scheduled offence to avoid maintain integrity and impartiality.
- To make NIA different and much more effective, its shortfalls must be debated openly and honestly. It should draw in a variety of voices, and incorporate checks and balances that will minimise the possibility of failure.
- It should be given necessary powers to prevent the enumerated offences rather than simply powers of investigation and enforcement.
- It should be allowed to share, collect, collate, analyse and disseminate the intelligence with other intelligence agencies to integrate and enhance India's security system.

Conclusion:

- India's security perspectives would inevitably be governed by the interplay of

its domestic imperatives, regional balance of forces and the global challenges which impinge on its role and capabilities. An overarching framework of India's national security has to take cognisance of military and non-military dimensions in terms of both external threats and internal challenges to its territorial integrity and national unity. Threats to a nation emanate as much from external aggression as from

internal strife but at times internal factors can erode national security more critically than any external danger.

- In this significance, a strong and independent National Investigation Agency can make Indians more secure by addressing the gaps in our current approach to preventing and investigating offences with a transnational character.

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