

OFFICERS' Pulse

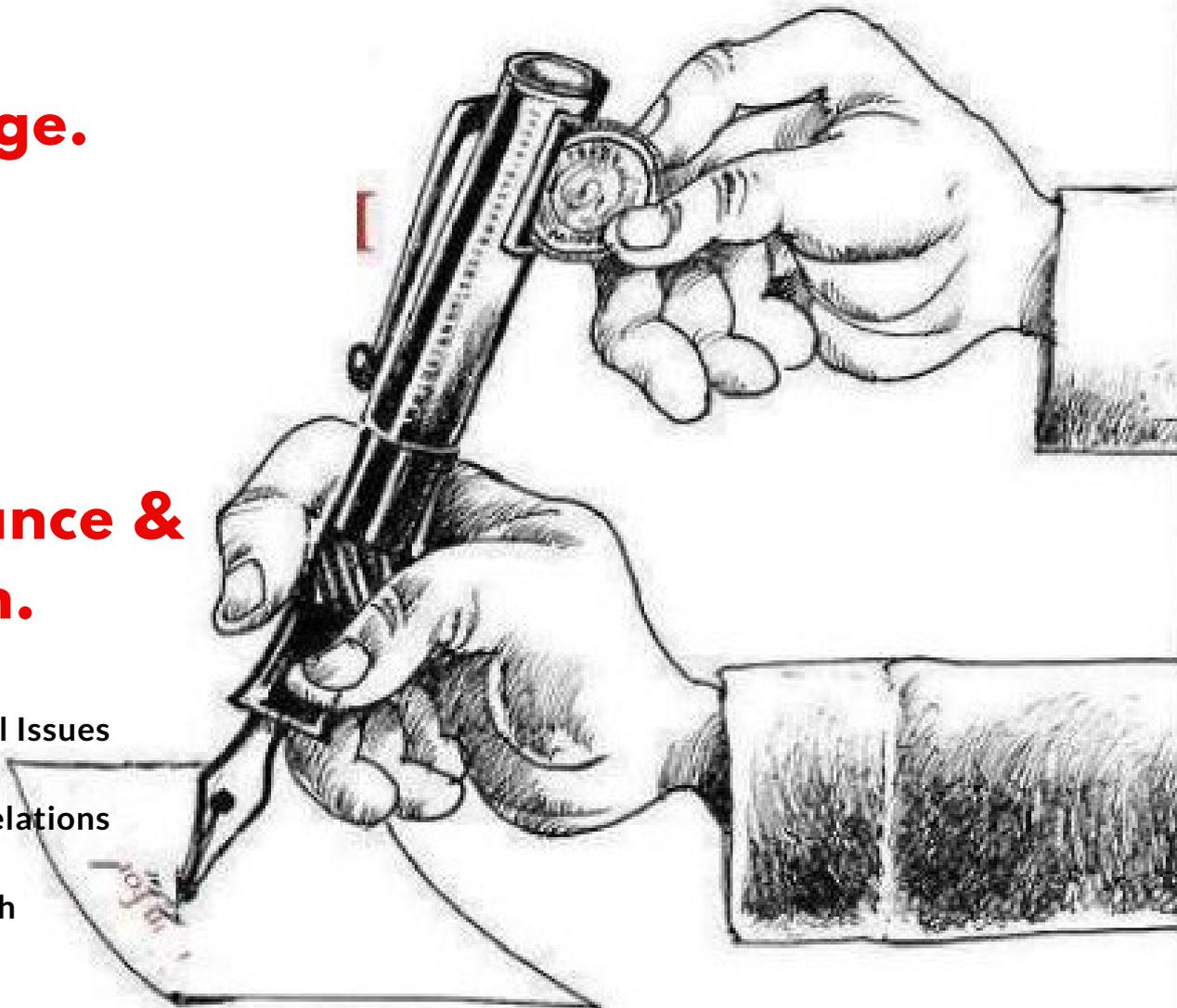
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Coverage.

The Hindu
PIB
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At a Glance & In Depth.

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



CURRENT AFFAIRS WEEKLY

THE PULSE OF UPSC AT
YOUR FINGER TIPS.



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News @ a glance

POLITY

1) Parliamentary standing committees

What are parliamentary committees?

- The functions of parliament being varied, complex and voluminous, it is been assisted by a number of committees to make a detailed scrutiny of all legislative measures and other matters called Parliamentary committees.
- These are an instrument of parliament for its own effective functioning.

Need for parliamentary committees:

- Committees are platforms for threadbare discussion on a proposed law.
- Committee meetings are 'closed door' and members are not bound by party whips, which allows them the latitude for a more meaningful exchange of views
- Disruptive changes in technology and the expansion of trade, commerce and economy in general throw up new policy challenges that require a constant reform of legal and institutional structures.
- The laws and regulations that are required to govern a digital society cannot be made without highly specialised knowledge and political acumen.
- To enable parliamentarians to understand the executive processes closely.

Where do they find mention?

- The Constitution of India makes a mention of these committees at different places but without making any specific provisions regarding the composition, tenure, functions etc., All these matters are dealt by the rules of two houses.

Who appoints them?

- They are appointed or elected by the house or nominated by the speaker/Chairman.
- Authority is derived from:
- Parliamentary committees draw their authority from Article 105 (on privileges of Parliament members) and

Article 118 (on Parliament's authority to make rules for regulating its procedure and conduct of business).

Classification of Parliamentary committees:

- Parliamentary committees are classified as standing committees and specific committees.

Select committee:

- These are committees formed for a specific purpose, for instance, to deliberate on a particular bill. Once the Bill is disposed of, that select committee ceases to exist.

Standing committee:

- Their existence is uninterrupted and usually reconstituted on an annual basis.
- On the basis of the nature of functions performed by them, they are classified as:
 1. Financial committees
 2. Department related standing committees
 3. Committee to inquire
 4. Committee to scrutinize and control
 5. Committees relating to the day-to-day business of the house
 6. Housekeeping committees or Service committees.
- Of all the above functions, Financial control is a critical tool for Parliament's authority over the executive; hence finance committees are considered to be particularly powerful. The three financial committees are
 1. The Public Accounts Committee,
 2. The Estimates Committee
 3. The Committee on Public Undertakings.

Why in news?

- Eleven of the 22 Bills introduced in the ongoing session of Parliament have been passed without scrutiny by parliamentary standing committees, their purpose being to enable detailed consideration of a piece of legislation. After the formation of the 17th Lok Sabha, parliamentary standing

committees have not been constituted as consultations among parties are still under way.

2) E-cigarettes:

What are e-cigarettes?

- An electronic cigarette is a battery-operated device that emits doses of vaporized nicotine, or non-nicotine solutions, for the user to inhale. It aims to provide a similar sensation to inhaling tobacco smoke, without the smoke.

Also known as:

- They are also known as e-cigs, electronic nicotine delivery systems, vaporizer cigarettes, vape pens.

Background:

- The first patent for a "smokeless, non-tobacco cigarette" was requested by Herbert A. Gilbert in 1963, but the current device did not appear until 2003.
- The e-cigarette as we know it was invented by Hon Lik, a Chinese pharmacist, working for Golden Dragon Holdings, now known as Ruyan.

How they work?

- Most e-cigarettes have:
 1. a mouthpiece, or cartridge
 2. a heating element
 3. a rechargeable battery
 4. electronic circuits
- As the user sucks on the mouthpiece, a sensor activates a heating element that vaporizes a flavored, liquid solution held in the mouthpiece. The person then "vapes," or inhales, the aerosol solution.
- The nicotine content varies from zero to "extra-high," or 24 to 36 milligrams (mg) per milliliter (ml).

Mouthpiece:

- The mouthpiece is a cartridge that is fixed to the end of a tube. A small plastic cup within the mouthpiece holds an absorbent material drenched in the liquid solution. The cartridge can either be refilled or replaced with another pre-filled cartridge when necessary.

Atomizer:

- The atomizer is a heating element that heats the liquid, causing it to vaporize. The solution can then be breathed in, or inhaled.

Battery:

- The battery powers the heating element. This is normally a rechargeable, lithium-ion battery.

Sensor:

- The sensor activates the heater when the user sucks on the device. An LED may show when it is activated.

Solution:

- The solution, also known as e-liquid or e-juice, is made by extracting nicotine from tobacco and mixing it with a base, usually propylene glycol, and flavoring. Propylene glycol is used in inhalers, for example, for asthma. There is a wide range of flavors to choose from, with names such as traditional, watermelon, menthol, and lava flow.

Issues surrounding e-cigarette:

- The tobacco industry plans to expand by achieving these twin objectives — attracting more youngsters and reducing quitting by adults. After all, the industry's end goal is profit and not improvement in health indicators.
- Dozens of studies show that smokers who use e-cigarettes are less, not more, likely to quit smoking. In fact, most of them become 'dual users', continuing to smoke cigarettes while also taking to e-cigarettes. This makes them vulnerable to added health risks.
- Even though warnings on many ENDS products clearly indicate that they are not a 'smoking cessation product', e-cigarettes are often promoted that way.
- Research suggests that many youngsters, who would otherwise have never started using nicotine, took up conventional smoking after being introduced to e-cigarettes.
- A misconception among students, parents and teachers that these cigarettes are free of nicotine.
- The tobacco industry, hit by the success of the state's efforts to reduce tobacco use, had developed such products to hold on to customers who would have otherwise quit.

Why in news?

- **The government has proposed to ban e-cigarettes and other electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) which were also recommended by**

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), which called for a “complete prohibition on ENDS and e-cigarettes in India in the greater interest of protecting public health, in accordance with the precautionary principle preventing public harm from a noxious agent.

3) NDQF (National Data Quality Forum)

What is National Data Quality Forum?

- **The National Data Quality Forum (NDQF) is an integrated national-level platform that aims to improve the quality of health and demographic data.**

Who launched NDQF?

- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)'s National Institute for Medical Statistics (ICMR-NIMS), in partnership with Population Council, launched the National Data Quality Forum (NDQF).

Functions of NDQF:

- NDQF will integrate learnings from scientific and evidence-based initiatives and guide actions through periodic workshops and conferences.
- Its activities will help establish protocols and good practices of data collection, storage, use and dissemination that can be applied to health and demographic data, as well as replicated across industries and sectors.
- It will fetch quality data in upcoming health services such as National Health Survey.
- NDQF hopes to bring together relevant stake holders, subject matter experts, industry leaders, decision makers and data scientist/ analyst onto a common platform.

Why in news?

- **The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)'s National Institute for Medical Statistics (ICMR-NIMS), in partnership with Population Council, launched the National Data Quality Forum (NDQF).**

4) UKIERI Mobility Programme:

About UKIERI:

- UK-India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI) started in April 2006 with the aim of enhancing educational linkages between India and the UK. UKIERI is funded from the UK by Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Department for Employment and Learning; and from India by Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department for Science and Technology, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, University Grants Commission and All India Council for Technical Education and EdCIL. It is delivered by Universities UK International (UUKi) and British Council.

UKIERI mobility programme:

- It will be a bilateral pilot programme which will support UK universities to collaborate with Indian partners to send UK students to India as part of their studies.

When will it start?

- The UKIERI Mobility Programme: Study in India will open on July 2019 with an aim to generate 200 opportunities for undergraduate students at UK universities by March 2021, with priority given to students from traditionally underrepresented groups.
- The British Council is the United Kingdom's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities; in this capacity, it promotes initiatives which support partnerships and student mobility across universities and countries.
- **The programme will support national and institutional-level objectives to:**
 - Increase the levels of outward student mobility from the UK to 13% by 2020,
 - Support the employability of UK graduates and help them prepare for a globally competitive workforce
 - Support the internationalization of Indian higher education through the diversification of the student body, and the consolidation of inter-institutional partnerships.

- This scheme will be good for individual students and good for UK universities, but it also fits neatly with the Government of India's goal to attract a greater number of international students and support the development of international networks for some of India's strongest universities"

Why in news?

- **India and UK have joined hands together for UKIERI Mobility Programme: Study in India which will allow UK students to visit India for higher studies.**

5) Government in process of finalising OTC drug policy

What are OTC drugs?

- Over-the-counter (OTC) drugs are medicines sold directly to a consumer without a prescription from a healthcare professional, as opposed to prescription drugs, which may be sold only to consumers possessing a valid prescription.

What is the OTC drug policy is about?

- The Organisation of Pharmaceutical Producers of India (OPPI), a body of multinational drug companies, has worked with the government over the past one year by providing inputs to the draft of the OTC policy.
- OTC drug policy is about bringing more clarity on the drugs that a wider population can access.

Need for OTC policy:

- A 2015 survey conducted by Lybrate among 20,000 people across 10 cities showed that 52% of people practised self-medication. But the country lacks a well-defined regulation for over the counter (OTC) medicines, important for patient safety.
- This OTC policy makes people to get access to the right medication. The idea is to make sure that the right product rests in the right place.

Benefits of OTC policy:

- OTC policy will improve access to drugs that are okay to be sold as OTC and restrict access to other drugs.
- By doing so, it helps to fight with the threat of antibiotic resistance and increasing steroid use among people.

- widening access to OTC drugs, automatically releases the government's time and resources, which can be focussed on drugs that need to be stringently prescribed.

Why in news?

- **The government is in the process of finalising an OTC drug policy. It is in the process of finetuning it and converting it into a legislation.**

6) Streamline delivery of services under PMJAY

Why in news?

- National Health Authority (NHA) implementing agency of Ayushman Bharat, Centre's flagship healthcare scheme has signed Memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Health care Federation of India (NATHEALTH) to streamline delivery of services under Ayushman Bharat.

Aim of this MoU:

- The partnership between National Health Authority (NHA) and the Healthcare Federation of India (NATHEALTH) aims to streamline all innovations ensuring that it increases the efficacy of service delivery of Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY).

Benefits of signing this MoU:

- The collaboration provides an industry interface for testing innovations
- provides mentorship and creating channels for facilitating support required for scaling these innovation standards
- This will bolster NHA's effectiveness in implementing its innovation strategy, which is aligned with the its vision of "Health for All"
- increase the efficacy of the health service delivery such that we can provide an increased access to high quality of care.
- increased adoption of numerous inventions, leading to an increase in access to quality care delivered under PM-JAY.
- provide and enable a healthcare innovation ecosystem that supports healthcare innovators and provides them opportunities to partner and scale.

About Ayushman Bharat:

- It is an umbrella of two major health initiatives, namely Health and Wellness Centres and National Health Protection Scheme.
- It is rolled out across all States/UTs in all districts with an objective to cover all the targeted beneficiaries.

Benefits

- AB-PMJAY provides a defined benefit cover of Rs. 5 lakh per family per year.
- This cover will take care of almost all secondary care and most of tertiary care procedures.
- To ensure that nobody is left out (especially women, children and elderly) there will be no cap on family size and age in the scheme.
- The benefit cover will also include pre and post-hospitalisation expenses.
- All pre-existing conditions will be covered from day one of the policy.
- A defined transport allowance per hospitalization will also be paid to the beneficiary.
- Benefits of the scheme are portable across the country and a beneficiary covered under the scheme will be allowed to take cashless benefits from any public/private empanelled hospitals across the country.
- The beneficiaries can avail benefits in both public and empanelled private facilities.
- All public hospitals in the States implementing AB-PMJAY, will be deemed empanelled for the Scheme.
- Hospitals belonging to Employee State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) may also be empanelled based on the bed occupancy ratio parameter.
- As for private hospitals, they will be empanelled online based on defined criteria.

- To control costs, the payments for treatment will be done on package rate (to be defined by the Government in advance) basis.
- The package rates will include all the costs associated with treatment.
- For beneficiaries, it will be a cashless, paperless transaction.
- Keeping in view the State specific requirements, States/ UTs will have the flexibility to modify these rates within a limited bandwidth.

Eligibility criteria

- AB-PMJAY is an entitlement-based scheme with entitlement decided on the basis of deprivation criteria in the SECC database.
- The different categories in rural and urban areas include:
 - families having only one room with kucha walls and kucha roof;
 - families having no adult member between age 16 to 59;
 - female headed households with no adult male member between age 16 to 59;
 - disabled member and no able-bodied adult member in the family; SC/ST households; landless households deriving major part of their income from manual casual labour,
 - Families in rural areas having any one of the following: households without shelter, destitute, living on alms, manual scavenger families, primitive tribal groups, legally released bonded labour.
- For urban areas, 11 defined occupational categories are entitled under the scheme

Art and culture

1) Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar birth anniversary (23 July 1856)

About Bal Gangadhar Tilak:

- **Bal Gangadhar Tilak** is one of the freedom fighters because of whose selfless sacrifice we are independent now.
- Born in a Brahmin family, Tilak was a teacher, advocate, journalist, scholar, mathematician, philosopher, and a reformer who helped lay the foundation for India's independence by building his own defiance of British rule into a national movement.

Facts about Tilak:

- Bal Gangadhar Tilak, was popularly known as Lokmanya, and dedicated his life for the cause of "Purna Swaraj" (complete self-rule).
- He was called "The Father of the Indian Unrest" by the British people who ruled India till 1947.
- Being the first and foremost leader of the Indian Independence Movement, Bal Gangadhar Tilak became popular as the 'Father of Swaraj'.
- To ensure that youngsters in India attain quality education, Bal Gangadhar Tilak found the Deccan Education Society in 1884.
- Bal Gangadhar Tilak joined the Indian National Congress Party in the year 1890. Before Independence, Bal Gangadhar Tilak started weeklies such as Kesari (The Lion) and Mahratta. Kesari was Marathi language weekly while

Mahratta was English weekly. Through these newspapers Tilak became widely known for his criticisms of British rule.

- Bal Gangadhar Tilak had popular leaders such as Bipin Chandra Pal and Lala Lajpat Rai as his political companions. The three were popularly known as 'Lal-Bal-Pal triumvirate.'
- When Bal Gangadhar Tilak was imprisoned during the freedom struggle, he wrote a book titled 'Gita-Rahasya' from behind the bars.
- Bal Gangadhar Tilak founded the Indian Home Rule League and served as its president and in 1916 he concluded the Lucknow Pact with Mohammed Ali Jinnah, which provided for Hindu-Muslim unity in the nationalist struggle.
- A coin was launched by the Government of India to commemorate his 150th birth anniversary.

Famous slogans by Tilak:

- Our nation is like a tree of which the original trunk is swarajya and the branches are swadeshi and boycott"
- "If God is put up with untouchability, I will not call him God"
- Swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it!
- "If the history of any nation is drawn back into the past, we finally reached a period of myths and traditions that eventually fade into impenetrable darkness".

Why in news?

- **Nation remembers his contribution on his 163rd birth anniversary on July 23.**

ENVIRONMENT

1) Gharial (Gavial or fish eating crocodile):

Why in news?

- Odisha has renewed its effort to revive the population of gharials, a “critically endangered” species of crocodile, in their natural habitat by releasing five reptiles into the Satkosia gorge of Mahanadi — the southernmost limit of gharials’

About gharial:

- Gharials, Critically endangered species of crocodile, are the large reptiles which are abundant in the main rivers and tributaries of the Indus, Ganga, Brahmaputra and Mahanadi-Brahmani.

Reviving gharial population in Odisha:

- These gharials, including three females and two males, were bred at the Nandankanan Zoological Park.
- The gharials are individually marked and fitted with radio transmitters for future identification and tracking of their migration route.
- The gharials are of appropriate age and size — more than three years of age and one meter in length
- They will help in gathering information on migration and factors affecting their survival,
- The department has engaged three postgraduate research scholars for day-to-day observation and keeping track of the released reptiles.
- The technical assistance is provided by the gharial Telemetry Project, The Madras Crocodile Bank Trust.

Background:

- Odisha is the only State in India having all three species — gharial, mugger and saltwater crocodile.
- The State forest department began conservation of these crocodile species in 1975 by establishing three rearing centres — Tikarpada for gharials in Angul district, Ramatirtha for muggers in Mayurbhanj and Bhitarkanika for

saltwater crocodiles in Kendrapara district.

2) *Dracaena cambodiana*:

Why in news?

- Researchers discover *Dracaena cambodiana* in Assam’s West Karbi Anglong dist.

Speciality about it:

- This is for the first time that a dragon tree species has been reported from India.

About *Dracaena cambodiana*:

- *Dracaena cambodiana* is a plant that yields dragon’s blood — a bright red resin used since ancient times as medicine, body oil, varnish, incense and dye.
- *Dracaena cambodiana* is an important medicinal plant as well as an ornamental tree.
- it is a major source of dragon’s blood, a precious traditional medicine in China.
- Several antifungal and antibacterial compounds, antioxidants, flavonoids, etc., have been extracted from various parts of the plant.
- In India, the *Dracaena* genus belonging to the family Asparagaceae is represented by nine species and two varieties in the Himalayan region, the northeast and Andaman and Nicobar Islands. But *Dracaena cambodiana* is the only true dragon tree species.

Threat to *Dracaena cambodiana*:

- Recent overexploitation to meet the increasing demand for dragon’s blood has resulted in rapid depletion of the plant.
- For this reason, the species is already listed in the inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of China.
- The habitat of the plant is severely fragmented due to open excavation of a stone quarry and there is continuing decrease in its area of occupancy and number of mature individuals
- Though the seeds are usually dispersed by birds, due to the large fruit size, only a few species of birds are able to swallow the fruits, thus limiting the scope of its natural conservation.

ECONOMY

1) India rises in global innovation ranking

What's in the news?

- India improved its ranking in the Global Innovation Index (GII) by five places to 52nd in 2019 from 57th position in the last year.
- India's rise in the rankings has been a consistent trend over the last few years. It had ranked 81 in 2015, which rose to 66 in 2016, 60 in 2017 and 57 in 2018.
- India is consistently among the top in the world in innovation drivers such as information and communication (ICT) services exports, graduates in science and engineering, the quality of universities, gross capital formation (*a measure of economy-wide investments*) and creative goods exports.
- India also stands out in the world's top science and technology clusters, with Bengaluru, Mumbai, and New Delhi featuring among the top 100 global clusters.

About GII

- The Global Innovation Index ranks and breaks down the innovation performance of 129 countries and economies around the world.
- It is released jointly by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Cornell University, INSEAD and other GII knowledge partners.

2) Sugar mills back move to build 4 million tonne buffer

Issues plaguing sugar industry

- The consistent increase in Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane results in over-production of cane and sugar, which in turn causes sugar prices to fall below cost levels. The sugar mills incur losses, leading to defaults in payments of farmers.
- *(FRP is an arrangement for the price to be paid to sugarcane farmers by the Sugar Mills and is announced each year by the Centre, on the advice of Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACAP) and after consultation with State Governments)*

- The estimated sugar production this sugar season (October 2018 to September 2019) is 32.9 million tonnes as against the domestic consumption of 26 million tonnes.
- To mitigate the situation of surplus stock, the Government has taken several steps like fixing Remunerative Price of ethanol derived from molasses as well as from sugarcane juice.

Why in News?

- The government has announced that it will create buffer stock of 4 million tonne sugar in 2019-20 to help the sugar industry deal with excess sugar in the country. It has also decided not to increase FRP of sugarcane from the current level of Rs 275 per 100 kg.
- Creation of buffer stock will withdraw 4 million tonnes of sugar from the market and will support the sugar prices.
- Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA), which represents public and private sector sugar mills, has welcomed both the decisions.

3) Boost demand for vehicles as 1 mn jobs under threat: ACMA

What's in the news?

- Auto Component Manufacturers Association (ACMA) of India has warned that 10 lakh people could lose their jobs in the automobile industry if immediate steps are not taken to stir up vehicle demand in the country.
- The automotive industry is facing an unprecedented slowdown. Vehicle sales in all segments have continued to fall for the last several months.
- Automobiles are expected to cost 10-15% more from 1 April 2020, when Bharat Stage VI (BS-VI) emission norms and new safety regulations are expected to kick in.
- ACMA has sought a uniform GST of 18 per cent for the entire automobile sector in order to stimulate vehicle demand.

4) Govt. must reduce borrowing by divesting stake in PSEs: Acharya

What is Crowding Out Effect?

- The crowding out effect refers to a situation of high government borrowing, which leads to an increase in interest rates.
- With higher interest rates, the cost of funds for the private sector increases and discourages private spending, i.e. high government borrowing crowds out private expenditure.

Why in News?

- The government is expected to borrow more than Rs 7 trillion from the markets to finance its **fiscal deficit** (*Total Expenditure of the government – Total Receipts except borrowings*) of 3.3% of GDP in fiscal 2019-20. It has raised concerns of crowding out private investment.
- Former Deputy Governor of the RBI Viral Acharya has said that the centre could reduce its borrowings by disinvestment in public sector enterprises.
- He added that another way to reduce crowding out would be the serious rationalization in the form of cutting back on subsidies and programmes that are not delivering long-run growth and, instead, focusing on the provision of public goods such as education, health and infrastructure.

5) HC order could dilute Centre's GST anti-profiteering efforts

What is National Anti-Profiteering Authority?

- The National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAA) has been constituted under the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017 to check the unfair profit-making activities by the trading community.
- The Authority's core function is to ensure that the benefits of the reduction in GST

rates on goods or services made by the GST Council are passed on to the ultimate consumers by way of a reduction in prices by traders.

Why in News?

- The Delhi High Court has provided relief to a private company by ordering an interim stay on the notice issued by the National Anti-Profiteering Authority seeking information on all products of the company.
- Concerns have been raised on the High Court's decision which could dilute the government's efforts in curbing unfair profit-making activities.

6) GST Council slashes tax rates on electric vehicles, chargers

What's in the News?

- The Goods & Service Tax Council has decided to lower the duty on all electric vehicles (EVs) and the charger for such vehicles. The tax rate is reduced from 12% to 5% on vehicles and from 18% to 5% on electric vehicle chargers.
- Also, to make EV popular for public transportation, hiring of electric buses by local authorities will be exempted from GST.

Govt's push toward electric mobility

- The share of electric vehicles in India is negligible at the moment. To make India a global manufacturing hub for electric vehicles, the Union Budget 2019 has proposed to offer additional income tax exemption of Rs 1.5 lakh on the interest paid on loans taken to purchase EVs.
- The Economic Survey 2019 also mentioned that EVs will be the future in India and the country can become the "Detroit of EVs" with appropriate policy measures.

International Relations

1) 5G, data localisation to dominate BRICS meeting

About BRICS

- BRICS brings together five major emerging economies- China, Brazil, Russia, India and South Africa. It comprises 43% of the world population, having 30% of the world GDP and a 17% share in the world trade.
- The Chairmanship of the forum is rotated annually among the members, in accordance with the acronym B-R-I-C-S.
- Regular annual Summits as well as meetings of Leaders on the margins of G20 Summits are held.
- Cooperation among members is predicated on three levels or “tracks” of interaction, namely:
 - **Track I:** Formal diplomatic engagement between the national governments
 - **Track II:** Engagement through government-affiliated institutions, e.g. state-owned enterprises and business councils
 - **Track III:** Civil society and “people-to-people” engagement.

Why in News?

- The meeting of the BRICS Foreign Ministers is scheduled to take place on 26 July 2019, in Brazil.
- Officials from the BRICS group have stated that the issues of unilateral sanctions by the U.S., 5G networks and data storage will be the important topics of discussion at the BRICS meet.

2) China stresses need for united trade front

What's in the News?

- China has conveyed its interest in partnering with India for building a united front of emerging economies and developing countries to counter the spiralling trade war with the U.S.
- Chinese Ambassador to India pointed out that the scale and impact of this initiative should echo the success of **Panchsheel**.

Agro-diplomacy

- In the backdrop of the ongoing trade war between China and the U.S., China has

opened its market for Indian rice and sugar.

- China is also stepping up the review and approval process for Indian pharmaceutical products.

About Panchsheel

- The Panchsheel treaty, also known as the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, is a 1954 declaration of foreign policy that defined the relationship between the Republic of India and the People's Republic of China.
- The five principles of this treaty are:
 - Mutual respect for each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty
 - Mutual non-aggression
 - Mutual non-interference
 - Equality and mutual benefit
 - Peaceful co-existence.

3) Boris Johnson the Brexiteer vows to seal divorce deal

What is Brexit?

- Brexit ("British exit") refers to the United Kingdom's decision in a June 23, 2016 referendum to leave the European Union (EU), which is a group of 28 countries that operates as a cohesive economic and political block.
- The process of leaving the EU formally began on March 29, 2017, when the then British Prime Minister Theresa May triggered **Article 50** of the Lisbon Treaty.
- The UK had two years from that date to negotiate a new relationship with the EU.

Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty

- It gives any EU member state the right to quit unilaterally, and outlines the procedure for doing so. It gives the leaving country two years to negotiate an exit deal and once it is set in motion it cannot be stopped except by unanimous consent of all member states.

Withdrawal Agreement

- The “Brexit deal” is a legally-binding text agreed to by the EU and UK government on November, 14 2018. The deal sets the terms of the UK's divorce from the EU and can only enter into force once ratified by the UK parliament.

- But, the deal Theresa May negotiated with the EU was rejected by Britain's House of Commons three times.
- May announced that she will step down as the Prime Minister after facing severe pressure to resign. Britain has to ratify a withdrawal agreement with the EU before leaving if it wants to avoid a **"no-deal" exit**.

When is the UK due to leave the EU?

- The UK had been due to leave on 29 March 2019, two years after it started the exit process. But as the UK MPs rejected the withdrawal agreement, EU leaders have now backed a six-month extension until **31 October 2019**.
- However, the UK will leave before this date if the withdrawal agreement is ratified by the UK and the EU before then.

Why do people oppose the deal?

- There are a broad range of complaints, many of which claim the deal fails to give back to the UK control of its own affairs from the EU.
- One of the biggest sticking points has been over what happens at the Irish border.

What is the 'backstop' plan?



- Northern Ireland is part of the UK while the Republic of Ireland, which is not, will remain part of the EU after Brexit.
- Under EU arrangements, it is currently easy for people and goods to cross the border between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, and there are fears that it will not remain so after Britain leaves.

- Many also fear that barriers between the north and south could revive the tensions that prevailed during the 30-year conflict that ended in 1998.
- To address this, the withdrawal agreement includes a "backstop" plan to ensure the border remains as smooth as possible until a trade deal between the UK and the EU is struck.
- On the other hand, opponents believe that the backstop plan would leave the UK subject to EU regulation even after Brexit.

Why in News?

- Boris Johnson, who had promised to lead Britain out of the European Union with or without an exit deal, replaced Theresa May as Prime Minister of the UK.

4) IMF cuts India's growth forecast for 2019-20 to 7%

About IMF

- The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is an international organization formed in 1945 at the Bretton Woods Conference. IMF provides financial assistance and advice to member countries.
- Consisting of 189-member nations, it is a specialized agency of the United Nations.
- Its primary purpose is to ensure the stability of the international monetary system—the system of exchange rates and international payments that enables countries to transact with each other.
- India is a member of the IMF.

Why in News?

- The IMF has released its updated **World Economic Outlook**.
- The report has cut India's growth forecast for 2019-20 to 7% from its forecast in April of 7.3% due to weak domestic demand conditions.
- The 7% forecast for 2019-20 is in line with those made by the Reserve Bank of India, Chief Economic Adviser Krishnamurthy Subramanian and the Asian Development Bank.
- The IMF has also cut its forecast for world GDP growth by 0.1 percentage point each in 2019 and 2020 to 3.2% and 3.5%, respectively.

PIB ANALYSIS

1) Dornier Squadron INAS 313

About :

- The Squadron will be operating from Chennai International Airport.
- With the commissioning of INAS 313, Tamil Nadu will have three naval air bases which is the highest number for any coastal state.
- The Squadron will operate **Dornier aircraft** which is a multi-role Short Range Maritime Reconnaissance (SRMR) aircraft manufactured by HAL, under license from RUAG Aerospace.
- The aircraft is used for maritime surveillance, Search and Rescue Operations and to provide targeting data to weapon platforms.

Why in News?

- Indian Naval Air Squadron (INAS) 313, the fifth Dornier aircraft squadron was commissioned into the Indian Navy by Admiral Karambir Singh, the Chief of the Naval Staff at Chennai.

2) Private Sector Investment in Defence Production

Why in News?

- The defence industry sector was opened up to 100% for private sector participation in May 2001 through licensing. In order to increase private sector participation and to simplify the procedures, following measures have been taken during the last three financial years:
- **Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP)** had been revised in 2016 wherein specific provisions have been introduced for stimulating growth of the domestic defence industry.
- A new category of procurement '**Buy {Indian-IDD (Indigenously Designed, Developed and Manufactured)}**' has been introduced in DPP-2016 to promote indigenous design and development of defence equipment.
- 'Buy (Indian)', 'Buy and Make (Indian)' & 'Make' categories of capital acquisition have been given preference over 'Buy

(Global)'& 'Buy & Make (Global)' categories.

- The 'Strategic Partnership (SP)' model has been notified by the government to establish long standing strategic partnerships with Indian entities through a transparent and competitive process, in order to tie up with Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) to seek technology transfers to set up domestic manufacturing infrastructure and supply chains.
- The '**Make' Procedure** has been simplified with provisions for funding of 90% of development cost by the Government to Indian industry.
- Separate procedure for 'Make-II' subcategory has been notified wherein a number of industry friendly provisions such as relaxation of eligibility criterion, minimal documentation, provision for considering proposals suggested by industry/individual, etc. have been introduced.
- The Government will establish two defence industrial corridors to serve as an engine of economic development and growth of defence industrial base in India.
- An innovation ecosystem for Defence titled Innovations for Defence Excellence (**iDEX**) has been launched. iDEX is aimed at creation of an ecosystem to foster innovation and technology development in Defence and Aerospace by engaging Industries including MSMEs, Start-ups, Individual Innovators, R&D institutes and Academia and provide them grants/funding and other support to carry out R&D.
- The **Mission Raksha Gyan Shakti** has been introduced to encourage IPR culture in indigenous defence industry.
- A Policy for indigenisation of components and spares used in Defence Platforms has been notified.
- A **Defence Investor Cell** has been created in the Defence Ministry to provide all necessary information including addressing queries related to investment

opportunities, procedures and regulatory requirements for investment in the sector.

- **FDI is now allowed under automatic route up to 49% and beyond 49% through Government route.**
- Export clearance process has been streamlined and a scheme for the promotion of defence exports has been notified.
- Technology Development Fund (TDF) has been set up by the GOI.
- Offset guidelines have been made flexible by allowing change of Indian Offset Partners (IOPs) and offset components, even in signed contracts.
- Foreign Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) are now not required to indicate the details of IOPs and products at the time of signing of contracts. 'Services' as an avenue of offset have been reinstated.

3) Committee on Virtual Currencies

What is a Virtual Currency?

- Virtual currency is a type of digital currency that is only available in electronic form and not in physical form.
- It is stored and transacted in only through designated software, mobile or computer applications, or through dedicated digital wallets, and the transactions occur over the Internet or over secure dedicated networks.
- Virtual currency is considered to be a subset of the digital currency group, which also includes cryptocurrencies.

Recommendations of the report

- The Committee was chaired by the Secretary, Office of the Economic Adviser, and had as its members Secretary, MeITY; Chairman (SEBI) and Deputy Governor, RBI.
- The report has highlighted the positive aspect of distributed-ledger technology (DLT) and suggested various applications, especially in financial services, for use of DLT in India.
- The DLT-based systems can be used by banks and other financial firms for processes such as loan-issuance tracking, collateral management, fraud detection and claims management in insurance, and

reconciliation systems in the securities market.

- The report has recommended banning of the crypto currencies in India and imposing fines and penalties for carrying on of any activities connected with crypto currencies in India.
- The report has also suggested Government to keep an open mind on official digital currency.
- Along with the report, the Draft Bill 'Banning of Cryptocurrency & Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2019' was also submitted.

Why in News?

- The Inter-Ministerial Committee which was constituted to study the issues related to virtual currencies has submitted its report.

4) The Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Bill, 2019

About:

- The Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 was enacted to provide for the constitution of a National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) and the Human Rights Courts for the protection of human rights.
- The current Amendment had been prepared based on the challenges faced in the last thirteen years, and will increase the efficiency of the Commission.

Provisions of the Bill:

- That a person who has been a Judge of the Supreme Court is also made eligible to be appointed as Chairperson of the Commission in addition to the person who has been the Chief Justice of India;
- To increase the Members of the Commission from two to three of which, one shall be a woman;
- To include Chairperson of the National Commission for Backward Classes, Chairperson of the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights and the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities as deemed Members of the Commission;
- To reduce the term of the Chairperson and Members of the Commission and the

State Commissions from five to three years and shall be eligible for re-appointment;

- To provide that a person who has been a Judge of a High Court is also made eligible to be appointed as Chairperson of the State Commission in addition to the person who has been the Chief Justice of the High Court; and,
- To confer upon State Commissions, the functions relating to human rights being discharged by the Union territories, other than the Union territory of Delhi, this will be dealt with by the Commission.

Why in News?

- The Rajya Sabha passed the Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Bill, 2019 unanimously.

5) Launch of Global Innovation Index (GII)

What is GII ?

- The Global Innovation Index (GII) is an annual ranking of countries by their capacity for, and success in, innovation.
- It is published by Cornell University, INSEAD, and the World Intellectual Property Organization, in partnership with other organisations and institutions
- The index is based on both subjective and objective data derived from several sources, including the International Telecommunication Union, the World Bank and the World Economic Forum.

Significance of GII

- This is the first time that the GII is being launched in an emerging economy.
- During the last few years innovation has become central to the Government of India's economic policy.
- This is now paying off with India's rising performance in the GII. India jumped 24 places in four years
- India was 81 in 2015, and in 2018 achieved the 57th position in the Global Innovation Index.
- India has been ranked the most innovative country in the Central and Southern Asia Region every year since 2011. India has consistently outperformed on innovation relative to its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita.

Why in News?

- Union Minister of Commerce & Industry and Railways, Piyush Goyal, will launch the Global Innovation Index (GII) in New Delhi.

6) Training and Employment of Rural Youth

Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)

- It is a placement linked skill development program which allows skilling in a PPP mode and assured placements in regular jobs in an organization not owned by the skilled person.
- DDU-GKY is being undertaken as PPP Project all over the country through Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) registered with the Ministry of Rural Development.
- Further, Guidelines of the scheme mandate State Governments to take up skill training projects with Corporate Social Responsibility funding.
- DDU-GKY Guidelines provide for setting apart 15% of the funds of the funds for national level beneficiaries from among minority groups.
- **Rural Self Employment and Training Institutes (RSETI)**
- Skill development through RSETI, enables the trainee to take Bank credit and start his/her own Micro-enterprise.
- Some of such trainees may also seek regular salaried jobs.
- DDU-GKY and RSETI schemes cover rural parts of all the States of the country.

Objectives of RSETI

- Rural BPL youth will be identified and trained for self-employment.
- The trainings offered will be demand driven.
- Area in which training will be provided to the trainee will be decided after assessment the candidate's aptitude.
- Hand holding support will be provided for assured credit linkage with banks.
- Escort services will be provided for at least for two years soon to ensure sustainability of micro enterprise trainees.
- The trainees will be provided intensive short-term residential self-employment

training programmes with free food and accommodation.

Why in News?

- Ministry of Rural Development is undertaking two initiatives in skill development under the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM)

7) New Space India Limited (NSIL)

Objective of NSIL

- To commercially exploit the research and development work of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Centres and constituent units of DOS.
- The emergence of NSIL would spur the growth of Indian industries in the space sector and enable Indian industries to scale up manufacturing and production base.

Roles and functions

- Small Satellite technology transfer to industry, wherein NSIL will obtain license from DOS/ISRO and sub-license it to Industries
- Manufacture of Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV) in collaboration with Private Sector
- Productionisation of Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) through Indian Industry
- Productionisation and marketing of Space-based products and services, including launch and application
- Transfer of technology developed by ISRO Centres and constituent units of DOS
- Marketing spin-off technologies and products/services, both in India and abroad
- Any other subject which Government of India deems fit.

Why in News?

- The Union Government has set up New Space India Limited (NSIL), a wholly-owned Government of India undertaking/ Central Public Sector Enterprise (CPSE), under the administrative control of Department of Space (DOS)

8) Security Situation Improves in J&K

Background

- The security situation in the State has witnessed an improvement in the first

half of this year over the corresponding period of 2018.

- Net infiltration has reduced by 43% and local recruitment has declined by 40%. Terrorist initiated incidents have declined by 28%.
- Actions initiated by the security forces witnessed an increase of 59% and have resulted in 22% increase in neutralization of terrorists.

Government Measures:

- Government has taken various measures, such as strengthening of security apparatus, strict enforcement of law against anti-national elements, intensified cordon and search operations to effectively deal with the challenges posed by the terrorist organizations.
- Forces keep a close watch on persons who attempt to provide support to terrorists and initiate action against them.
- For a peaceful resolution of the Kashmir issue the Government is always open to talks within the framework of the Constitution of India.
- In order to bring about overall development for the benefit of people of Jammu and Kashmir and to bring the Kashmiri youth in the mainstream the Prime Minister has announced a package of Rs.80, 068 crores.
- This package consists of 63 major development projects in Road sector, Power generation and transmission, health infrastructure, establishment of 2 AIIMS, IITs, IIMs and tourism related projects etc.
- Training and employment opportunities for the youth of Jammu and Kashmir are also provided under many schemes such as HIMAYAT and PMKVY.
- In order to mainstream the youth, special emphasis is being given to Watan Ko Jano program, student exchange program, sports as well as civic action program of CAPFs.

9) Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)

Objective:

- Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) including Self-Employment and Talent Utilization (SETU) is Government of India's endeavour to promote a culture of

innovation and entrepreneurship. Its objective is to serve as a platform for the promotion of world-class Innovation Hubs, Grand Challenges, Start-up businesses and other self-employment activities, particularly in technology driven areas.

- **The Atal Innovation Mission shall have two core functions:**
- Entrepreneurship promotion through Self-Employment and Talent Utilization, wherein innovators would be supported and mentored to become successful entrepreneurs
- Innovation promotion: to provide a platform where innovative ideas are generated
- 1. Atal Tinkering Labs
- 2. Atal Incubation Centers
- 3. Scale-up support to Established Incubators

What is the rationale of AIM being introduced in school?

- To create scientific temper and cultivate the spirit of curiosity and innovation among young minds.
- Inculcate skills such as design mind-set, computational thinking, adaptive learning, physical computing, rapid calculations, measurements, etc.

Why in News?

- The Government of India is encouraging the schools to provide exposure of science and technology to students so that they can be exposed with futuristic technology platforms.

10) Freedom of Expression to Government Employees

Background

- It is mentioned that as per Rule 8 of Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964, no Government servant shall, except with the previous sanction of the Government, own or conduct or participate in the editing or management of, any public media.

Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules provides

- Which has the effect of an adverse criticism of any current or recent policy or action of the Central Government or a State Government

- Which is capable of embarrassing the relations between the Central Government and the Government of any State
- Which is capable of embarrassing the relations between the Central Government and the Government of any foreign State

Exceptions

- Bonafide expression of views by office-bearers of a trade union or association of Government servants for the purpose of safeguarding the conditions of service of such Government servants or for securing an improvement thereof.
- Views expressed by a Government servant in his official capacity or in the due performance of the duties assigned to him.

11) India and Maldives

Objective

- The objective of the MoU is to improve people to people contact between the two countries by providing an alternate, direct and less expensive means for transport for passengers and goods.
- It also aims to advance economic, social and cultural ties between the two countries.
- Sea connectivity between the two countries would help to promote inbound tourism, particularly health and wellness tourism.

Importance of Maldives

- The Maldives, is a popular tourist destination, has grown in strategic importance in recent years as China and India to establish their influence in the region, and as Beijing pushes ahead with its global trade and infrastructure plan.
- Spread over nearly 1,200 islands spanning more than 90,000 sq km, key shipping lanes where Beijing and New Delhi compete to pursue their often-conflicting maritime strategies pass through this tiny Indian Ocean nation.
- Though small, the Maldives is India's important neighbour. India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi called the Maldives "a valued partner in the Indian Ocean neighbourhood".

- India-Maldives “ties are built on a very strong foundation” the contours of which are defined by shared strategic, security, economic and developmental goals.

Why in News?

- India and Maldives had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Passenger and Cargo Services in Male last month.

12) PENCIL Portal

What is PENCIL Portal?

- The PENCIL is an electronic platform that aims at involving Centre, State, District, Governments, civil society and the general public in achieving the target of child labour free society.

Objective:

- It is a separate online portal to ensure effective enforcement of the provisions of the Child Labour Act and smooth implementation of the National Child Labour Project (NCLP) Scheme.

Components:

- The PENCIL Portal has various components, namely Child Tracking System, Complaint Corner, State Government, National Child Labour Project and Convergence.

Features:

- The Portal connects Central Government to State Government(s), District(s), all Project Societies and the General public.
- Further, online complaints regarding child labour can also be filed by anybody on the Pencil Portal. The complaint gets assigned to the concerned Nodal Officer automatically by the system for further necessary action.

Implementation status:

- Of the 1010 complaints of child labour received on PENCIL, the District Nodal Officers have updated the status in respect of 361 complaints as resolved.

What is National Child Labour Project (NCLP)?

- The National Child Labour Project (NCLP) is a Central Sector Scheme for rehabilitation of child labour.
- Under this Scheme, funds are provided directly to the District Project Societies headed by District Magistrate/Collector/Deputy Commissioner who in turn allocates the

funds to NGOs/Voluntary Agencies, etc. for running of Special Training Centres.

The scheme focuses on:

- All child workers below the age of 14 years in the identified target area.
- Adolescent workers below the age of 18 years in the target area engaged in hazardous occupations / processes²
- Families of Child workers in the identified target area

Why in News?

- Union Minister for Labour informed Lok Sabha that 361 Complaints of Child Labour have been resolved through Pencil Portal.

13) Terror Financing

About:

- The financing of terrorism involves providing finance or financial support to individual terrorists or non-state actors.[1] Some countries maintain a list of terrorist organizations and have money laundering laws, which are also used to combat providing finance for those organizations.

Steps to combat terror financing in the country:

- Strengthening the provisions in the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 by criminalizing the production or smuggling or circulation of high quality counterfeit Indian currency.
- A Terror Funding and Fake Currency (TFFC) Cell has been constituted in National Investigation Agency (NIA) to conduct focused investigation of terror funding and fake currency cases.
- Training programmes are regularly conducted for the State Police personnel on issues relating to combating terrorist financing.
- FICN Coordination Group (FCORD) has been formed by the Ministry of Home Affairs to share intelligence/information among the security agencies of the states/centre to counter the problem of circulation of fake currency notes.
- **Government has also taken some other measures to check the smuggling and circulation of Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN) in the country, which inter alia, include:**

- Security at the international borders has been strengthened by using new surveillance technology, deploying additional manpower for round the clock surveillance, establishing observation posts along the international border, erection of border fencing and intensive patrolling.
- A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between India and Bangladesh to prevent and counter smuggling and circulation of fake currency notes.
- Training programmes are conducted for the Police officials of Nepal and Bangladesh to sensitize them about smuggling/ counterfeiting of Indian currency.

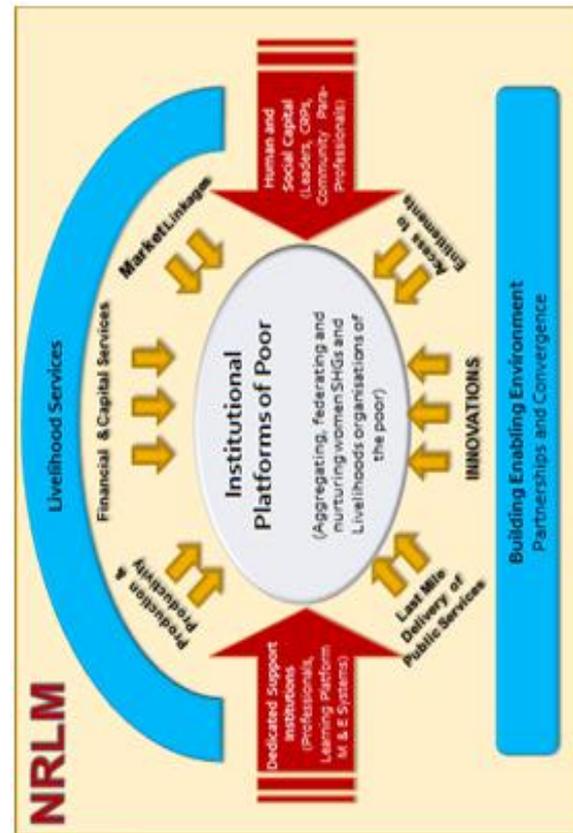
Why in News?

- Steps being taken to combat Terror Financing and circulation of Fake Indian Currency Notes (FICN) in the country were informed by Minister of Home Affairs in Lok Sabha.

14) Rashtriya Aajeevika Mission

About Rashtriya Aajeevika Mission

- The Ministry of Rural Development is implementing Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) across the country in a mission mode with the objective of organizing the rural poor women into Self Help Groups (SHGs), and continuously nurturing and supporting them to take economic activities till they attain appreciable increase in income over a period of time to improve their quality of life and come out of abject poverty.



Mission objective:

- Organizing the rural poor women into Self Help Groups (SHGs), and continuously nurturing and supporting them to take economic activities till they attain appreciable increase in income over a period of time to improve their quality of life and come out of abject poverty.

Sub-schemes under DAY-NRLM:

- Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs), enables a trainee to take bank credit and start his/her own Micro-enterprise.
- Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP) for facilitating the rural poor for setting up of micro Enterprises.
- Aajeevika Grameen Express Yojana (AGEY) to facilitate transport facilities in the rural areas which also provides self-employment opportunities to the rural poor.

Why in News?

- Union Minister for Rural Development informed Lok Sabha about the Rashtriya Aajeevika Mission.

15) Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme

Need of revised TB programme

- India accounted for 27 per cent of the world's total TB cases in 2017 as per the WHO's Global TB Report 2018.
- In terms of incidence, i.e., number of cases per lakh population, India ranks 35th in the world.

About the Program:

- The Ministry has developed the National Strategic Plan (NSP) for Tuberculosis (2017-2025) with the goal of ending TB by 2025.
- The key focus areas are:
 - Early diagnosis of all the TB patients, prompt treatment with quality assured drugs and treatment regimens along with suitable patient support systems to promote adherence.
 - Engaging with the patients seeking care in the private sector.

- Prevention strategies including active case finding and contact tracing in high risk / vulnerable population
- Airborne infection control.
- Multi-sectoral response for addressing social determinants.

The Government of India has taken following steps:

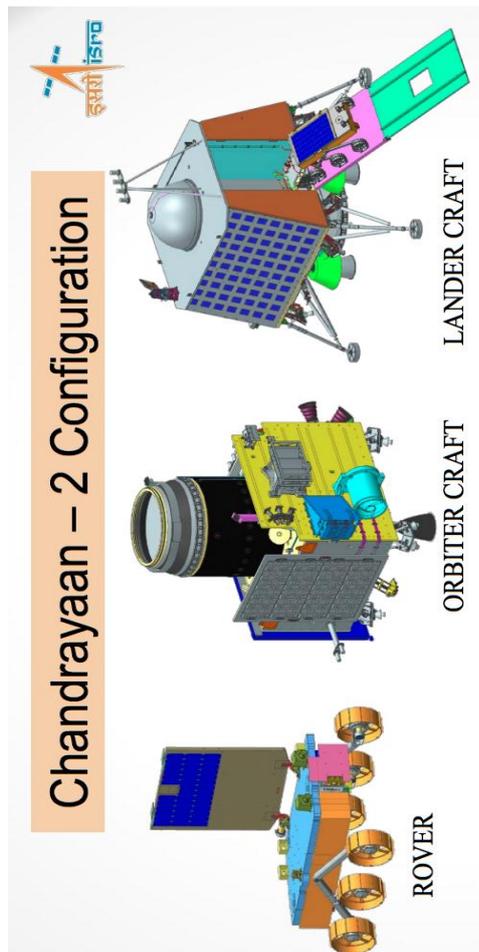
- Communication campaign aimed at raising levels of awareness, reduction of stigma among community both through mass and mid media.
- Strategies like active case finding and contact tracing to create awareness and early diagnosis.
- **Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY)** :This is a Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme. Introduced in April 2018 by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW).It provides support worth Rs 500/- per month for the duration of treatment to TB patients.

SCIENCE and TECHNOLOGY

1) Chandrayaan II Mission

About the mission

- India's second mission to the Moon
- A totally indigenous mission comprising of an **Orbiter, Lander** and **Rover**.
- After reaching the 100 km lunar orbit, the **Lander** (named **Vikram**) housing the Rover will separate from the Orbiter.
- After a controlled descent, the **Lander will soft land** on the lunar surface **near the south pole** and **deploy a Rover**.
- The mission will carry a **six-wheeled Rover** which will move around the landing site in semi-autonomous mode as decided by the ground commands.
- The **instruments** on the rover **will observe** the **lunar surface** and send back data, which will be useful for **analysis** of the **lunar soil**.
- GSLV Mark III shall be used for the launch.



Why in news?

- The prime minister and the president applauded the ISRO team for successfully launching the Chandrayaan II orbiter into space.

Significance

- Chandrayaan2 is unique because it will explore and perform studies on the south pole region of lunar terrain which is not explored and sampled by any past mission.
- Chandrayaan-2 carries a total of 13 payloads, including eight on the Orbiter, three on the Lander, two on the Rover, as well as one from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration of the United States.

2) Ransomware

What is a ransomware?

- The concept behind ransomware, a well-known form of malicious software, is quite simple: Lock and encrypt a victim's computer data, then demand a ransom to restore access.
- In many cases, the victim must pay the cybercriminal within a set amount of time or risk losing access forever.

How ransomware works?

- There are a number of vectors ransomware can take to access a computer.
- One of the most common delivery systems is phishing spam — attachments that come to the victim in an email, masquerading as a file they should trust.
- Once they're downloaded and opened, they can take over the victim's computer.
- Some other, more aggressive forms of ransomware, like NotPetya, exploit security holes to infect computers without needing to trick users.

What does a ransomware do upon infecting?

- There are several things the malware might do once it's taken over the victim's computer, but by far the most common action is to encrypt some or all of the user's files
- These files cannot be decrypted without a mathematical key known only by the attacker.

- The user is presented with a message explaining that their files are now inaccessible and will only be decrypted if the victim sends an untraceable Bitcoin payment (or any cryptocurrency) to the attacker.
- In some forms of malware, the attacker might claim to be a law enforcement agency shutting down the victim's computer due to the presence of pornography or pirated software on it, and demanding the payment of a "fine," perhaps to make victims less likely to report the attack to authorities.

Types of ransomware

The five types of ransomware are:

1. **Crypto malware:** This is a well-known form of ransomware and can cause a great deal of damage. One of the most familiar examples is the 2017 WannaCry ransomware attack, which targeted thousands of computers around the world and spread itself within corporate networks globally.
2. **Lockers:** This kind of ransomware is known for infecting your operating system to completely lock you out of your computer, making it impossible to access any of your files or applications.
3. **Scareware:** This is fake software that acts like an antivirus or a cleaning tool. Scareware often claims to have found issues on your computer, demanding money to resolve the issue. Some types of scareware lock your computer, while others flood your screen with annoying alerts and pop-up messages.
4. **Doxware:** Commonly referred to as leakware, doxware threatens to publish your stolen information online if you don't pay the ransom. As more people store sensitive files and personal photos on their computers, it's understandable that many individuals panic and pay the ransom when their files have been hijacked.
5. **RaaS:** Otherwise known as "Ransomware as a Service," RaaS is a type of malware hosted anonymously by a hacker. These criminals handle everything from distributing the ransomware and collecting payments to managing decryptors — software that restores data

access — in exchange for their cut of the ransom.

Who is a target for ransomware?

- There are several different ways attackers choose the organizations they target with ransomware.
- Sometimes it's a matter of opportunity: for instance, attackers might target universities because they tend to have smaller security teams and a disparate user base that does a lot of file sharing, making it easier to penetrate their defenses.
- On the other hand, some organizations are tempting targets because they seem more likely to pay a ransom quickly.
- For instance, government agencies or medical facilities often need immediate access to their files.

How to prevent ransomware attacks?

- Keep your operating system patched and up-to-date to ensure you have fewer vulnerabilities to exploit.
- Don't install software or give it administrative privileges unless you know exactly what it is and what it does.
- Install antivirus software, which detects malicious programs like ransomware as they arrive, and whitelisting software, which prevents unauthorized applications from executing in the first place.
- And, of course, back up your files, frequently and automatically.
- That won't stop a malware attack, but it can make the damage caused by one much less significant.

Ransomware facts and figures

- There's a lot of money in ransomware, and the market expanded rapidly from the beginning of the decade.
- In 2017, ransomware resulted in \$5 billion in losses, both in terms of ransoms paid and spending and lost time in recovering from attacks.
- That's up 15 times from 2015.
- In the first quarter of 2018, just one kind of ransomware software, SamSam, collected a \$1 million in ransom money.
- It's estimated that 45 percent of ransomware attacks target healthcare orgs, and, conversely, that 85 percent of malware infections at healthcare orgs are ransomware.

- 90 percent of financial institutions in the US were targeted by a ransomware attack in 2017.

Ransomware examples

- **CryptoLocker**, a 2013 attack that launched the modern ransomware age and infected up to 500,000 machines at its height
- **TeslaCrypt**, which targeted gaming files and saw constant improvement during its reign of terror
- **SimpleLocker**, the first widespread ransomware attack that focused on mobile devices
- **WannaCry**, which spread autonomously from computer to computer using EternalBlue, an exploit developed by the NSA and then stolen by hackers
- **NotPetya**, which also used **EternalBlue** and may have been part of a Russian-directed cyberattack against Ukraine
- **Locky**, which started spreading in 2016, was "similar in its mode of attack to the notorious banking software Dridex."

Why in news?

- Globally, losses from ransomware rose by 60% last year to \$8 billion, according to data compiled by the Internet Society's Online Trust Alliance.
- Services in the U.S. cities of Baltimore and Maryland were paralysed earlier this year when a ransomware attack locked up computer networks and made it impossible for residents to make property transactions or pay their municipal bills.
- Officials refused to meet hacker demands for a ransom of \$76,000 to unlock the systems, but have been saddled with an estimated \$18 million in costs of restoring and rebuilding the city's computer networks.

What to do after hit by ransomware?

- While the FBI and others warn against paying ransoms, some analysts say there is no clear answer for victims when critical data is locked.

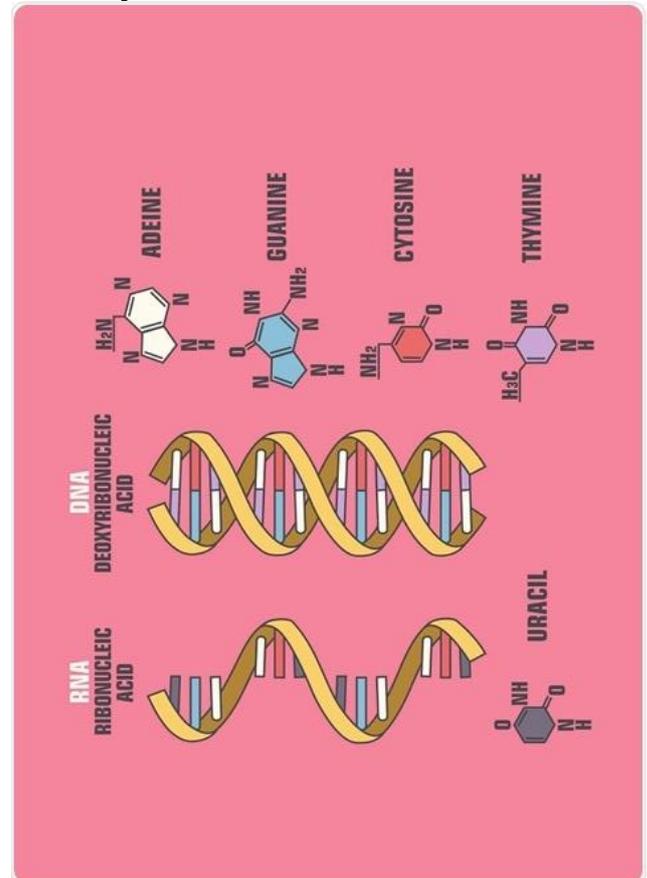
3) Micro RNAs

What is an RNA?

- Ribonucleic acid (RNA) is an important biological macromolecule that functions to convert the genetic information encoded by DNA into proteins.

DNA vs. RNA

- Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) is a complex molecule that is primarily found within the nucleus of cells. DNA is present within all living organisms and contains the genetic instructions required for the development and maintenance of life.



- Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) is a complex molecule that is primarily found within the nucleus of cells. DNA is present within all living organisms and contains the genetic instructions required for the development and maintenance of life.
- The nucleic acid of DNA is deoxyribose, whereas the nucleic acid of RNA is ribose. As demonstrated by their names, the deoxyribose of DNA lacks one oxygen molecule as compared to the ribose sugar of RNA. The nucleotides that comprise DNA include adenine (A), guanine (G), cytosine (C) and thymine (T), whereas RNA nucleotides include A, G, C and uracil (U).
- While the structure of DNA is a double-helix in eukaryotic cells, RNA is typically single-stranded and comes in a variety of shapes and types. The single-stranded structure of RNA allows this molecule to fold back on itself

Types of RNAs

- The three primary types of RNA molecules are messenger RNA, transfer RNA and ribosomal RNA.
- Messenger RNA (**mRNA**) plays an important role in the transcription of DNA.
- Transfer RNA (**tRNA**) plays an important role in the translation portion of protein synthesis
- Ribosomal RNA (**rRNA**) is a component of cell organelles called ribosomes.

What are micro RNAs?

- Some RNAs, known as small regulatory RNAs, have the ability to regulate gene expression.
- MicroRNAs (miRNAs) are a type of regulatory RNA that can inhibit gene expression by halting translation.
- They do so by binding to a specific location on mRNA, preventing the molecule from being translated.
- MicroRNAs have also been linked to the development of some types of cancers and a particular chromosome mutation called a translocation.

Mechanism of working

- miRNAs function via base-pairing with complementary sequences within mRNA molecules
- As a result, these mRNA molecules are silenced

The function of microRNAs

- MicroRNAs have been shown to be involved in a wide range of biological processes such as cell cycle control, apoptosis and several developmental and physiological processes including stem cell differentiation, hematopoiesis, hypoxia, cardiac and skeletal muscle development, neurogenesis, insulin secretion, cholesterol metabolism, aging, immune responses and viral replication.
- In addition, highly tissue-specific expression and distinct temporal expression patterns during embryogenesis suggest that microRNAs play a key role in the differentiation and maintenance of tissue identity.

Uses of studying Micro RNAs

- In addition to their important roles in healthy individuals, microRNAs have also been implicated in a number of diseases

including a broad range of cancers, heart disease and neurological diseases.

- Consequently, microRNAs are intensely studied as candidates for diagnostic and prognostic biomarkers and predictors of drug response.

Why in news?

- A team from the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), Bengaluru, has found that the rich colour in fruits and leaves of plants are indirectly controlled by specific micro RNAs — miR828 and miR858.
- Grape plants bear fruits having colours that can be deep purple or green. This colour is due to compounds called anthocyanins and flavonols, both of which are present in grape fruits.
- These Micro RNAs are behaving like regulators of gene expression, acting like switches.
- They decide which protein should be made and how much in a given cell or tissue or an organism.
- The miRNA inhibit target RNAs by cutting them into two bits in plants.

Significance

- Anthocyanins and flavonols remove reactive oxygen species that damage DNA, RNA and proteins.
- Reactive oxygen species are involved in most human diseases
- Plants having anthocyanin and flavonol can be generated by controlling the microRNAs affecting them.

Further applications

- The genes identified here can be used in bio fortification.

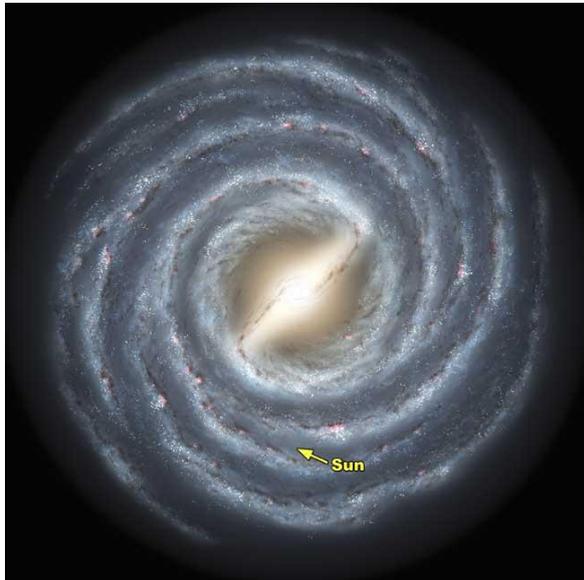
What is Bio fortification?

- Bio fortification is the process by which the nutritional quality of food crops is improved through agronomic practices, conventional plant breeding, or modern biotechnology.
- Bio fortification differs from conventional fortification in that biofortification aims to increase nutrient levels in crops during plant growth rather than through manual means during processing of the crops.

4) Milky way galaxy

About Milky way

- A galaxy is a collection of stars and interstellar material held together by gravity.
- The galaxy our Sun lives in is called the Milky Way or the Galaxy (note the capital 'G').
- The name 'Milky Way' comes from the band of light that is seen overhead on very dark nights.
- The ancients called it the Celestial River.
- Galileo showed that the band is actually an edge-on concentration of stars seen looking through the disk of our Galaxy from the inside.
- The Milky Way contains at least 100 billion stars and its centre contains an intense radio source believed to be the supermassive black hole Sagittarius A.



Why in news?

- The Milky Way, home to our sun and billions of other stars, merged with another smaller galaxy in a colossal cosmic collision roughly 10 billion years ago as per recent research studies.

Elaboration

- Researchers from the Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias (IAC) used the Gaia space telescope to take exact measurements of the position, brightness and distance of around one million stars in the Milky Way within 6,500 light years of the Sun.
- They identified two distinct stellar sets—one "bluer" and containing less metal, one "redder" containing more.

- After studying their movement and composition, the team determined that both sets of stars were equally old, but the bluer ones had been set into a "chaotic motion"—evidence of the Milky Way swallowing a smaller galaxy in the distant recesses of time.
- They also determined that the collision contributed to "violent bursts" of star formation for around another four billion years, after which gas from those formations settled into the Milky Way's thin disk that runs through the centre of the galaxy.
- The team believes remnants of the dwarf galaxy, known as Gaia-Enceladus, eventually formed the halo of the present-day Milky Way.

5) Brain-Machine Interface (BMI)

What is it?

- A brain-machine interface (BMI) is a device that translates neuronal information into commands capable of controlling external software or hardware such as a computer or robotic arm.
- BMIs are often used as assisted living devices for individuals with motor or sensory impairments.

Elaboration

- **Brain-Computer Interface (BCI):** devices that enable its users to interact with computers by mean of brain-activity only, this activity being generally measured by ElectroEncephaloGraphy (EEG).
- **Electroencephalography (EEG):** physiological method of choice to record the electrical activity generated by the brain via electrodes placed on the scalp surface.

How our brain works

- The human brains contains about 86 bilion nerve cells called neurons, each individually linked to other neurons by way of connectors called axons and dendrites. Every time, we think, move or feel, neurons are at work. Indeed, the brain generates huge amount of neural activities. Basically, small electric signals that move from neuron to neuron are doing the work.

- To put simply, the brain is divided into two main sections:
 - The limbic system
 - The neocortex.
- The limbic system is responsible for our primal urges, as well as those related to survival, such as eating and reproducing. Our neocortex is the most advanced area, and it's responsible for logical functions that make us good at languages, technology, business, and philosophy.

How BMI/BCI work?

- Our brains are filled with neurons, individual nerve cells connected to one another by dendrites and axons.
- Every time we think, move, feel or remember something, our neurons are at work.
- That work is carried out by small electric signals that zip from neuron to neuron as fast as 250 mph
- Although the paths the signals take are insulated by something called myelin, some of the electric signal escapes.
- Scientists can detect those signals, interpret what they mean and use them to direct a device of some kind.
- It can also work the other way around. For example, researchers could figure out what signals are sent to the brain by the optic nerve when someone sees the color red.
- They could rig a camera that would send those exact signals into someone's brain whenever the camera saw red, allowing a blind person to "see" without eyes.

BCI input/output

- One of the biggest challenges facing brain-computer interface researchers today is the basic mechanics of the interface itself.
- The easiest and least invasive method is a set of electrodes EEG, attached to the scalp.
- The electrodes can read brain signals. However, the skull blocks a lot of the electrical signal, and it distorts what does get through.

Sensory input BCI

- A computer converts a signal, such as one from a video camera, into the voltages necessary to trigger neurons.
- The signals are sent to an implant in the proper area of the brain, and if everything works correctly, the neurons fire and the

subject receives a visual image corresponding to what the camera sees.

How to overcome the challenges faced by EEG?

- To get a higher-resolution signal, scientists can implant electrodes directly into the gray matter of the brain itself, or on the surface of the brain, beneath the skull.
- This allows for much more direct reception of electric signals and allows electrode placement in the specific area of the brain where the appropriate signals are generated.
- This approach has many problems, however.
- It requires invasive surgery to implant the electrodes, and devices left in the brain long-term tend to cause the formation of scar tissue in the gray matter.
- This scar tissue ultimately blocks signals.

Why does it matter?

- The combination of humans and technology could be more powerful than artificial intelligence.
- For example, when we make decisions based on a combination of perception and reasoning, neuro-technologies could be used to improve our perception.
- One of the most exciting areas of BCI research is the development of devices that can be controlled by thoughts.
- Future BCI devices that may allow severely disabled people to function independently.
- For a quadriplegic, something as basic as controlling a computer cursor via mental commands would represent a revolutionary improvement in quality of life.

A bright future

- Once the basic mechanism of converting thoughts to computerized or robotic action is perfected, the potential uses for the technology are almost limitless.
- Instead of a robotic hand, disabled users could have robotic braces attached to their own limbs, allowing them to move and directly interact with the environment.
- This could even be accomplished without the "robotic" part of the device.
- Signals could be sent to the appropriate motor control nerves in the hands,

bypassing a damaged section of the spinal cord and allowing actual movement of the subject's own hands.

What these brain-computer interfaces are actually capable of?

- For healthy individuals, BCIs or BMIs which are non-invasive are available.
- There are currently two main technologies, fMRI and EEG.
- Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI): measures brain activity by detecting changes associated with blood flow.
- The first requires a massive machine, but the second has actually become available to a more general audience
- BCI can also be a promising interaction tool for healthy people, with several potential applications in the field of multimedia, VR or video games among many other potential applications

Why in news?

- Futurist entrepreneur Elon Musk late on Tuesday revealed his secretive Neuralink startup is making progress on an interface linking brains with computers.
- His start-up has created a wireless implantable device that can – theoretically – read your mind.
- Neuralink claims to have achieved major advances toward Musk's goal of having human and machine intelligence work in "symbiosis"

Elaboration of this development

- Neuralink says it has designed very small "threads" – smaller than a human hair – that can be injected into the brain to detect the activity of neurons.
- It also says it has developed a robot to insert those threads in the brain, under the direction of a neurosurgeon.

Applications

- The near-term practical applications of implanting chips in brains are medical.
- Scientists and doctors have worked for decades on devices or other means of directly interacting with the brain, from cochlear implants to deep brain stimulation treatments for Parkinson's disease.
- The Neuralink device would be a significant improvement on the current state of the art, Musk claims, with 1,000 times more electrodes interfacing with the brain than the leading FDA-approved device used for Parkinson's patients.
- Neuralink plans to seek FDA approval for a human clinical trial as early as 2020, on a version of its device that is "only intended for patients with serious unmet medical diseases.
- The first clinical trial will target patients with complete paralysis due to an upper spinal cord, and will involve installing four of Neuralink's implants in patients' brains

News in Depth

AIR NEWS

1) Environmental Hormones

What are Environmental Hormones?

- Environmental hormones are chemical compounds that resemble endocrine hormones. These compounds are able to activate the same endocrine receptors as their natural counterparts and can thus disrupt hormonal activity.
- Environmental hormones are also known as endocrine disruptors.
- They may be either of natural origins, such as phytoestrogens, or of synthetic origin. The sewage and wastewater that are inevitably produced at any industrial worksite often contain large quantities of pollutants and environmental hormones.
- Because environmental hormones do not break down easily, they can have a significant negative effect on not only the environment but also the human body.

Recent development:

- The team used rice hulls, which are discarded during rice harvesting, to create eco-friendly and economical, biochar.
- The surface of the biochar was coated with nano-sized manganese dioxide to create a nano composite.
- The high efficiency and low cost of the biochar-nanocomposite catalyst are based on the combination of the advantages of the biochar and manganese dioxide.

Why in News?

- Researchers have developed a wastewater treatment process that uses a common agricultural byproduct to effectively remove pollutants and environmental hormones, known as endocrine disruptors.

2) Paid News

What is Paid News?

- Paid news is defined as any news or analysis appearing in print or electronic media for consideration in cash or kind. Manifestations of paid news are:

- Advertisements camouflaged as news,
- Denial of coverage to select electoral candidates,
- Exchanging of advertisement space for equity stakes between media houses and corporate.

Recent trend in Paid News:

- The Press Council of India has received 58 cases of paid news during 2018-19 from the Election Commission and others.
- No specific instance of paid news in electronic media (Private Satellite TV Channels) has been brought to the notice of his ministry.

WHAT IS 'PAID NEWS'?	
<p>Bad news about 'paid news'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Misleads public and hampers the ability of people to form correct opinions Influences voters and affects their right to information Seeks to circumvent election expenditure laws/ceiling 	<p>Dos</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> News should be clearly demarcated from advertisements by printing disclaimers News must always carry a credit line and should be set in a typeface that would distinguish it from advertisements
<p>Do's</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There should not be any discreet exchange of money or favours to ensure positive content or negative content aimed at a political party or any candidate No undue credit to be given to political party or any candidate 	<p>Decided case of paid news</p> <p>Print media cases would be sent to ECI, which refers them to the PCI for action; electronic media cases would be referred to National Broadcasters Association.</p>  <p>RAJESH LAKHONI, Chief Electoral Officer</p>
<p>'Paid news' has been defined by the Press Council of India as any news or analysis appearing in any media (print & electronic) for a price in cash or kind as consideration.</p>	

Steps recommended to counter paid news:

- The Press Council of India has recommended amendments to the

Representation of the People Act, 1951 in order to make the incidence of paid news a punishable electoral malpractice.

- The Election Commission has also recommended for including paid news in the category of corrupt practices or electoral offences.

Why in News?

- Union Information and Broadcasting Minister informed Rajya Sabha about the steps being taken by the Government to curb the menace of Paid News.

3) SONALI

Why in News?

- Scientists in Bangladesh have developed a method to convert Jute fibre into low-cost biodegradable cellulose sheets named

'Sonali' which can be used as wrapping material and carrying bag.

About SONALI:

- It has been developed by the state-run Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC).
- The physical qualities of the invented jute fibre and plastic are quite similar.
- The Eco-friendly jute poly bags made up of Sonali can be used in garments and food packaging work and they are not harmful for human health.
- The commercial production of these bags is likely to start by the year-end.
- The main challenge in the large scale adoption of Sonali sheet is the relatively high cost of production which is almost doubles that of polythene. However, production on a large scale is expected to bring down the cost.

Hindu Editorial Analysis

1) On the tremor of unwelcome amendments.

GS Paper 2[Polity and Governance]

Context:

- Right to Information (Amendment) Bill has been tabled in the parliament, which seeks to amend the status, salary and tenure of the Central Information Commissioners (CICs) and State Information Commissioners.

Right to Information Act 2005

- Purpose of the Act
- To bring transparency and accountability in governance. And, the Public authorities are required to make disclosure on various aspects of their structure and functioning. And, this disclosure include.
- Disclosure on their organisations, functions and structure,
- Powers and duties of its officers and employers,
- Financial information.

How is the right to information enforced under the Act?

- The Act has established three tier structures for enforcing the right to information guaranteed under the Act.
- Public authorities designate some of their officers as Public information officers.
- And, appeals from their decisions go to appellate authority.
- Appeals against the order of the appellate authority to the state information commission or the central information commission.
- This information commission consists of a chief information commission and up to 10 Information commissioners.

Analysis.

- Though the Act couldn't do much on its all provisions of transparency and accountability, the citizens got some sort of empowerment to challenge the state.

The act and the Amendments.

- Under the original Act, the term of an Information Commissioner was fixed at 5 years. Further, the salary of the CIC and ICs (at the central level) was to be equivalent to the salary paid to the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners, respectively.

- Similarly, the salary of the CIC and ICs (at the state level) was to be equivalent to the salary paid to the Election Commissioners and the Chief Secretary to the state government, respectively.
- The Amendment Bill states that the central government will notify the term of office of Information Commissioners. Further, the salaries, allowances, and other terms and conditions of service of the central and state CIC and ICs will be determined by the central government.
- The distinction misses a crucial point. Free speech and fair elections are Constitutional goals and part of the Constitution's basic structure. The Election and Information Commissions act as facilitators of these goals.
- The Information Commission is essentially an adjudicatory body that decides whether an individual is entitled to access government information. The Commission decides disputes between the government and the citizen.
- It is, therefore, imperative that the Commission be free from all government control. It is precisely this independence that the Bill attacks.
- Therefore, if the law attacks the right to information of the people, it must be opposed. And, the purpose of the Act of 2005 should not be undermined as it has created an element of enthusiasm in the people of one of the largest democracies in the world.

2. On sucking up surplus

GS Paper3 [Economy]

Context:

- As part of the Finance Bill introduced in Parliament, the Centre had proposed amendments to the Securities and Exchange Board of India Act, 1992 that were seen as affecting SEBI's financial autonomy.
- Specifically, the amendments required that after 25% of its surplus cash in any year is transferred to its reserve fund, SEBI will have to transfer the remaining 75% to the government.

Significance:

- The government rejected the plea from SEBI's officials asking the government to reconsider its decision, thus paving the way for further conflict.
- There seems to be very little rationale in the government's decision to confiscate funds from the chief markets regulator. the recent amendments require SEBI to seek approval from the government to go ahead with its capital expenditure plans.
- [Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) was first established in the year 1988 as a non-statutory body for regulating the securities market. It became an autonomous body by the Government of India on 12 May 1992 and given statutory powers in 1992 with SEBI Act 1992 being passed by the Indian Parliament. SEBI has its headquarters at the business district of Bandra Kurla Complex in Mumbai, and has Northern, Eastern, Southern and Western Regional Offices in New Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai and Ahmedabad respectively.]

Concerns

- A regulatory agency that is at the government's mercy to run its financial and administrative operations cannot be expected to be independent.
- Further, the lack of financial autonomy can affect SEBI's plans to improve the quality of its operations by investing in new technologies and other requirements to upgrade market infrastructure. This can affect the health of India's financial markets in the long run.
- Also, the Reserve Bank of India and the National Sample Survey Office have come under pressure in recent months, and the latest move on SEBI adds to this worrisome trend of independent agencies being subordinated by the government.

Opinion

- The centralisation of powers will be risky. And, regulatory agencies such as SEBI need to be given full powers over their assets and be made accountable to Parliament. Stripping them of their powers by subsuming them under the wings of the government will affect their credibility.

3. On an ally, a partner and American unilateralism

GS Paper 2[Governance and Bilateral relations]

Context:

- The decision by the United States to terminate Turkey's participation in the F-35 joint strike fighter project and its threat to impose economic sanctions on Ankara under Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) in response to the Turkish decision to buy Russian S-400 air defence systems has close parallels to the predicament facing India on the same issue.
- There are major differences in the two cases, but there are also remarkable similarities.
- [CAATSA-The Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act, CAATSA is a United States federal law that imposed sanctions on Iran, North Korea, and Russia. The bill was passed on July 27, 2017 in the Senate.]

Significance

- Turkey has been a long-standing member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and an integral part of the American-led alliance whose principal goal was and continues to be to prevent the expansion of Russian influence and power.
- It was also seen as the principal gateway for the projection of American power in West Asia, especially in Syria and Iraq, through Incirlik air base. The U.S. and other members of NATO are worried that a Russian military relationship with Turkey could provide Moscow access to technological secrets underpinning NATO's most sophisticated weapon systems.
- In a statement, the White House said, "The F-35 cannot coexist with a Russian intelligence collection platform that will be used to learn about its advanced capabilities." Ankara has remained defiant and the first deliveries of components of the S-400 systems arrived in Turkey

How can all these be counterproductive?

- Turkey's decision to acquire the Russian systems emanated in part from the American refusal under the Barack

Obama administration to sell it the Patriot anti-missile system that Ankara considered essential for its air defence in the context of the Syrian civil war.

- Turkey's forced ejection from the F-35 project now could also turn out to be counterproductive.
- And, some reports suggest that Turkey is planning to buy advanced Sukhoi fighter jets (the Su-35 and/or the Su-57) from Russia to compensate for the loss of the F-35 planes, thus further complicating the issue of NATO interoperability.

India's place

- While it is true that the U.S. now considers India a "strategic partner", principally because it views New Delhi as a counterweight to expanding Chinese influence in the Asia-Pacific region, India has never been a formal ally of Washington.
- Also, from Jawaharlal Nehru's time New Delhi has attempted to maintain its strategic autonomy and indeed has had a close defence relationship with Russia, which continues to be India's largest arms supplier.
- Therefore, there is far less reason for the U.S. to take on at India's decision to buy the S-400 air defence system.
- However, the current American administration seems incapable of understanding these glaring differences between the two cases.
- **Here**, the threat of CAATSA sanctions comes at a very inopportune time for India as it has been considering major multi-billion dollar arms acquisition deals with the U.S. The U.S. is also India's largest trading partner and is intimately engaged in India's civil nuclear programme. While there is a provision for waivers in the CAATSA legislation, these are not automatic and are tied principally to Russian behaviour and therefore almost impossible to implement.
- The root of the problem lies in America's twin bias of acting unilaterally without regard to the interests of its international interlocutors and of enforcing provisions of pieces of its domestic legislation on foreign countries that have no say in the drafting of these laws and little place to appeals against them.

- **In sum**, the US has done so in the case of sanctioning countries, including India and Turkey, importing Iranian oil regardless of their dependence on this source of supply or their traditional relations with Iran.
- Here, unilateralism is clearly visible in US' act of doing so.

4. A misleading presentation of a labour programme

GS Paper 3[Economy]

Context:

- A chapter in the recent Economic Survey on the "transformational" impact of Aadhaar on the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) needs scrutiny.

Significance

- The glaring flaws on economic survey have been presented in three counts-factual, methodological and conceptual. the paper has been uncritically accepted and widely cited in the Survey. This raises questions about the credibility of the Chief Economic Adviser's (an affiliate of the ISB) office. Here are six reasons why the Economic Survey's presentation of the MGNREGA is misleading.
- Furthermore, Aadhaar has to be understood as merely being a pipeline for funds transfer in the MGNREGA.
- A lack of adequate financial allocation, pending liabilities and low wages has dogged the programme over the past eight years.
- About 20% of the Budget allocation in each of the last five years is of pending wage liabilities from previous years.
- It was worst in 2016-17, when pending liabilities were 35% (Rs. 13,220 crore) out of a total allocation of Rs. 38,500 crore. MGNREGA wages in many States are about 40% lower than the Ministry of Labour's national minimum wage.
- Instead of sufficiently funding MGNREGA, a legal right, in times of severe drought, there is disproportionate attention by the government towards creating a complex architecture based on technical solutions.
- [MGNREGA-National **Rural Employment Guarantee Act 2005** (or, NREGA No 42, later renamed as the "Mahatma Gandhi

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act", MGNREGA), is an Indian labour law and social security measure that aims to guarantee the 'right to work'.

- It aims to enhance livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work. The MGNREGA was initiated with the objective of "enhancing livelihood security in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year, to every household whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled manual work". Another aim of MGNREGA is to create durable assets (such as roads, canals, ponds and wells). Employment is to be provided within 5 km of an applicant's residence, and minimum wages are to be paid. If work is not provided within 15 days of applying, applicants are entitled to an unemployment allowance. Thus, employment under MGNREGA is a legal entitlement.]
- Errors in entering technological aspects' inputs of MNREGA.
- The Economic Survey misrepresents the continuous technological interventions in the MGNREGA since its inception. Electronic funds transfer started as far back as in 2011 through the Electronic Fund Management System (eFMS), and became symbolic of the Direct Benefit Transfers (DBT).
- Also, the Survey makes strong assertions that timely payment of wages have positively impacted worker participation. To support this, the Survey makes dubious causal claims on reduction in payment delays due to the introduction of Aadhaar. However, their understanding of payment delays is faulty.
- Further, wage payments to MGNREGA workers happen in two stages. The first is the time taken by the blocks to generate the electronic Funds Transfer Orders (FTO) and send it digitally to the Central government.
- The second is the time taken by the Central government to process these FTOs and transfer wages to workers' accounts.

- While it is true that delays in the first stage have reduced, those in the second stage continue to be unacceptably high.
- Only about 30% of the payments are credited on time; the Central government takes more than 50 days (which is the second stage) to transfer wages to workers.
- Thus, the Survey only considers the delays in the first stage.
- Moreover, the Survey attributes an increase in demand for and supply of work in drought-affected areas to Aadhaar ignoring other crucial factors.
- While the Survey rightfully acknowledges the nature of positive targeting of the MGNREGA — with women, Dalits and Adivasis benefitting the most — it wrongfully attributes it wholly to the introduction of Aadhaar.

Violation of certain rights in this regard.

- It is telling that the Survey completely ignores numerous instances where technology has resulted in violation of workers' rights under the MGNREGA — some examples are not registering work demand, not paying unemployment allowance and compensation for payment delays among others.
- In fact, another ISB study, not cited in the Economic Survey shows that 38% of the Aadhaar-based transactions in Jharkhand were diverted to a different account.
- Altogether, overlooking these fundamental issues, cherry-picking studies and using flawed analyses to justify technocracy is an example of ethical paralysis. Thus, we should bring in a foolproof system to ensure the right funds end up in the right hands.

5. ON what's next.

Context:

- The National Medical Commission (NMC) Bill and its new version has some sharp divergences from the original. Presented in Parliament in 2017, it proposed to replace the Medical Council Act, 1956, but it lapsed with the dissolution of the Lok Sabha.
- The NMC will have authority over medical education — approvals for colleges, admissions, tests and fee-fixation. The

provisions of interest are in the core area of medical education.

Significance

- The Bill proposes to unify testing for exit from the MBBS course, and entry into postgraduate medical courses. A single National Exit Test (NEXT) will be conducted across the country replacing the final year MBBS exam, and the scores used to allot PG seats as well.
- It will allow medical graduates to start medical practice, seek admission to PG courses, and screen foreign medical graduates who want to practise in India.

What are the provisions of the bill?

- The Bill proposes to unify testing for exit from the MBBS course, and entry into postgraduate medical courses. A single National Exit Test (NEXT) will be conducted across the country replacing the final year MBBS exam, and the scores used to allot PG seats as well.
- Also, it offers a definite benefit for students who invest much time and energy in five years of training in classrooms, labs and the bedside, by reducing the number of tests they would have to take in case they aim to study further.
- There are detractors, many of them from Tamil Nadu — which is still politically opposing the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) — who believe that NEXT will undermine the federal system, and ask whether a test at the MBBS level would suffice as an entry criterion for PG courses.
- The Bill has also removed the exemption hitherto given to Central institutions, the AIIMS and JIPMER, from NEET for admission to MBBS and allied courses.
- Thus, the government has moved in the right direction, as there was resentment and a charge of elitism at the exclusion of some institutions from an exam that aimed at standardising testing for entry into MBBS.

Challenges to its implementation

- The government also decided to scrap a proposal in the original Bill to conduct an additional licentiate exam that all medical graduates would have to take in order to practise, in the face of virulent opposition.

- It also removed, rightly, a proposal in the older Bill for a bridge course for AYUSH practitioners to make a lateral entry into allopathy.
- It is crucial now for the Centre to work amicably with States, and the Indian Medical Association, which is opposed to the Bill, taking them along to ease the process of implementation.
- At any cost, it must avoid the creation of inflexible roadblocks as happened with NEET in some States.
- Totally, the clearance of these hurdles, then, as recalled from experience, become fraught with legal and political battles, leaving behind much bitterness. NEXT will have to be a lot neater.

6. On Faltering steps in the anti-AIDS march

GS Paper 1 and 3[Society, International Relations, Organisations, etc.]

Context:

- The Joint UN programme on AIDS, commonly known as UNAIDS, is facing one of the worst challenges afflicting the global AIDS response — this time an existential threat questioning its very relevance.
- The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, is expected to appoint a new executive director after the departure of Michel Sidibé in May 2019 on the recommendation of the programme coordinating board which manages the organisation. There are strong contenders from Africa and the U.S. in the reckoning among those who have been shortlisted.
- [The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) is the main advocate for accelerated, comprehensive and coordinated global action on the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

UNAIDS

- Formation: 26 July 1994; 25 years ago
- Type : Non-governmental organization, Joint Programme,
- Headquarters : Geneva, Switzerland
- Head: UNAIDS Executive Director,
- Parent organization: United Nations Economic and Social Council

- UNAIDS Headquarters building in Geneva, Switzerland.
- The mission of UNAIDS is to lead, strengthen and support an expanded response to HIV and AIDS that includes preventing transmission of HIV, providing care and support to those already living with the virus, reducing the vulnerability of individuals and communities to HIV and alleviating the impact of the epidemic.
- UNAIDS seeks to prevent the HIV/AIDS epidemic from becoming a severe pandemic.

UNAIDS has five goals:

- Leadership and advocacy for effective action on the pandemic;
- Strategic information and technical support to guide efforts against AIDS worldwide;
- Tracking, monitoring and evaluation of the pandemic and of responses to it;
- Civil society engagement and the development of strategic partnerships;
- Mobilization of resources to support an effective response.]

Significance

- At such a crucial time, it is disturbing to hear voices again questioning the relevance of UNAIDS for the global response.
- There are suggestions that AIDS should go back to the World Health Organisation (WHO) where it originally belonged to some 25 years ago. And that the new executive director should be equipped with an exit strategy to wind up the organisation.
- Here, instead of the efforts done by UNAIDS, the disease continue to endanger lives everywhere in the world.
- Again, since its establishment in 1994, UNAIDS has been able to successfully mobilise world opinion to mount an exceptional response to an epidemic which has consumed over 20 million lives with still no effective treatment or cure.
- Also, the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) 2001 was a game changer with the adoption of a political resolution that itself was exceptional in many ways.
- And, the creation of a Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM)

and the slashing of prices of AIDS drugs by Indian generics have brought treatment within the reach of many countries.

- Today some 22 million people are under antiretroviral therapy (ART) and preventing mother-to-child transmission of HIV has become an achievable goal by 2020. The organisation has provided leadership to many countries which in 10 years (2001-2010) could halt the epidemic and reverse the trend.
- Regions such as eastern Europe and Central Asia and West Asia are nowhere near reaching that goal, with many countries such as Russia witnessing a raging epidemic among drug users and men who have sex with men (MSM) communities. With the top leadership in UNAIDS exhorting countries to bring AIDS “out of isolation” and integrate with health systems, the political leadership in many countries have thought that AIDS is no more a challenge.
- AIDS epidemic can simply be treated away by saturating anti-retroviral (ARV) coverage is a myth that AIDS affects the poor, marginalised and criminalised communities disproportionately as they face challenges in accessing the ‘test and treat’ programmes.
- The ever increasing number of young people who are joining the ranks of vulnerable populations do not get prevention messages like in the past.
- National programmes do not any more consider condoms, sexual education and drug harm reduction as central to the prevention of HIV transmission that results from unprotected sex and drug use. Funding for non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations working on prevention has virtually dried up.
- Further, Senior country-level positions are, in many instances, held by people who do not possess the core competence to constructively engage political leadership to undertake legal reforms and provide access to services to marginalised populations

Problems with UNAIDS

- Activism surrounding AIDS has suddenly fizzled out emboldening many countries,

especially in Africa, to further stigmatise and discriminate by enacting new laws that criminalise vulnerable sections of society.

- To add to its woes, the charges against one of the senior most staff and his exit from the organisation have seriously compromised UNAIDS at a time when the global response needs its leadership the most.
- Altogether, here, the commitment to end AIDS by 2030 is ambitious but not impossible to achieve. And, what we need is a re-energised UNAIDS with a strong and fearless leadership from a person of high integrity and commitment along with a sincere effort to remove the deadwood from the organisation. Any thought of winding it up or giving the mandate back to WHO would be suicidal at this moment.

7. On A bridge across the India-Pakistan abyss

GS Paper2 [Governance]

Context:

- Ties between India and Pakistan are at an ebb — their lowest in two decades. The thread from this phase, as a series of events — the Kargil war (1999), the Agra Summit (2001), the attack on Parliament (2001) and Operation Parakram (2001-02).
- In the wake of the Pulwama terror attack in Jammu and Kashmir in February this year, India attacked terror targets in Pakistan which in turn sent fighter jets to the border. Subsequently, after India moved missiles and deployed submarines, Pakistan raised a full air alert and imposed an airspace ban that lasted till mid-July.

Opportunity to talk(Kartarpur hope).

- What has been disconnected from all those tensions are the talks on the Kartarpur corridor.
- The offer from Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan to open the corridor was conveyed first by Pakistan Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa, and accepted by Mr. Modi, marking a rare moment of coordination between the two nations.
- Further, giving life to the wishes of so many will also ensure political dividends

in India, an aspect no government in the State or at the Centre can ignore.

What is Kartarpur corridor?

- It is a proposed border corridor between the neighbouring nations of India and Pakistan, connecting the Sikh shrines of Dera Baba Nanak Sahib (located in Punjab, India) and Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur (in Punjab, Pakistan). Currently under planning, the corridor is intended to allow religious devotees from India to visit the Gurdwara in Kartarpur, 4.7 kilometres (2.9 miles) from the Pakistan-India border, without a visa
- The symbolism for pilgrims who will be able to travel from Dera Baba Nanak town in Punjab to the Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur just a few kilometres inside Pakistan, which are sites where Guru Nanak spent his last few years, goes well beyond the date and year.
- This is a route that the Guru and his followers traversed with ease for half a millennium until Partition resulted in the India-Pakistan border cutting through it.
- While Sikh pilgrims have been given easy access since then to Guru Nanak's birthplace at Nankana Sahib, the circuitous 200 km route to Kartarpur via Amritsar-Wagah has been off limits.
- The Kartarpur shrine has one of the last copies of the original Guru Granth Sahib; there are some who believe that it contains not only the wisdom of the 10 Gurus but is itself the 11th and last Guru.

Some headwinds to doom this hope too.

- Despite the rich significance of the corridor, there were many reasons for the earlier hesitation to revive the project.
- However, in the case of Pakistan, these have not been as transparent; with the military establishment's surprise backing only raised doubts on whether Islamabad has an ulterior motive.
- India spelt out its apprehensions over Pakistan allowing separatist Khalistan groups, including those funded by groups based in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada, to try and influence pilgrims. Of specific concern is the 'Referendum 2020' plan by the Sikhs for Justice group (banned by India).
- The other irritant is the possible use of the corridor for drugs and arms

movement; there are many routes and tunnels at the border between the two Punjabs.

- The terror threat by Pakistani Punjab-based anti-India groups such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammad is also a constant concern.
- **Possibilities to leverage the talk between the two countries.**
- The template that Kartarpur has given both sides is also worth considering for the format of other bilateral negotiations given that the talks have been immunised from both terror attacks and election rhetoric.
- The venue of the talks, at the Attari-Wagah zero point, lends itself to more successful outcomes too away from the glare of the media, without focus on arrangements for both parties.

- The two sides can cross over, meet for the duration of talks and return after issuing a pre-arranged joint statement.
- **In sum**, thus, it would be a travesty to waste the opportunity made possible by the Kartarpur corridor, and by extension, the founder of the Sikh faith himself (revered by Hindus and Muslims in India and Pakistan) to bring both countries back to the table for talks.
- The most famous story at Kartarpur is the one of the 'miracle' that Guru Nanak wrought after his death as his Hindu and Muslim followers debated late into the night whether their Guru should be cremated or buried.
- As pilgrims across the border pay a visit in November, it should be clear what the bigger miracle is: that the Kartarpur exception has been made at all.

RSTV Big Picture

1) ON Jobs: Locals First Policy

GS Paper 2[Polity and Governance]

Context:

- Fulfilling one of its biggest election promises, Jagan Mohan Reddy government passed a bill in the Assembly which reserves 75 per cent jobs factories for Andhra Pradesh youths, making it the first state in the country to introduce such a provision in the private sector.
- The Andhra Pradesh Employment of Local Candidates in Industries/Factories Act, 2019 was approved by the Assembly.
- The Bill states that if an industrial unit fails to find enough skilled local workers, then it will have to train them in association with the state government.
- The company is also required to act in accordance with the new law and submit a quarterly compliance report. Similar demands have come up in different states like Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Gujarat.
- The Congress party government led by Chief Minister Kamal Nath in Madhya Pradesh has vowed 70 percent reservation for native candidates.

Significance:

- Here, does the law breaches the concept of equality? Is this a desirable development?
- Experts say that with this companies would not be able to hide behind the excuse of not finding skilled labour. Thus, companies are, in a way, discouraged to invest in states like Andhra Pradesh or wherever such laws are applicable.
- The Act also says that only those units that are listed in the first schedule of the Factories Act would be exempted after the government looks into each application and takes a call. These are mostly hazardous industries such as petroleum, pharmaceuticals, coal, fertilizers and cement among others.
- Companies would have to comply with these provisions within three years of commencement of the Act and would have to provide quarterly reports about local appointments to a nodal agency.

- The possible impacts of the implementation of the law
- Reduced investment in the state.
- Flight of capital from India to elsewhere.
- Less migration to the state and less demand in the economy that can affect state's revenue.
- However, youth in the state will be encouraged to take up the jobs in the state.
- State can leverage its demographic advantage of more number of youths.

Impact on education:

- Higher education might get affected.
- And if a similar stance is adopted by western countries then where will the students go for higher education.

Impact on economy:

- Investments might reduce in states which raise such stipulations.
- The advantage of producing at a lower cost will disappear.
- There may be a flight of capital from India to Africa where many countries are running advertisements calling Indian entrepreneurs to invest there.
- Counterproductive for the states.
- It will affect growth at some point.
- It is kind of a curb which will impact innovation.
- eg: Maharashtra- if any company gets an incentive from the state government then that particular company will have to have at least 70% of native unskilled workers .Karnataka- for Kannadigas a law was brought out but it exempted IT and Biotech professionals.

Impact on society

- People with transferable jobs might not be able to adjust in any state.
- These policies may lead to corruption and dishonesty and so is a threat to social harmony.
- There might be a demand for SRC on the lines of NRC(National Register of Citizens).

Way forward:

- Incentives for companies that train local labour. (Incentives in the form of lower electricity charges or land use charges. Something on the lines of CSR).

- Policies which bring out the best in people.
- This particular law should be properly vetted.
- Economy based reservation.
- Maharashtra encouraged Dalits to set up industries and thus job was created. Other states can follow the same path.

2. on Demography: Advantage India

GS Paper1&2 [Society and Economy]

Context:

- In many ways, India's demographics are the envy of the world. As populations in countries such as China, US, and Japan is getting older, India's population is getting younger. Since 2018, India's working-age population has grown larger than the dependent population — children aged 14 or below as well as people above 65 years of age.
- This bulge in the working-age population is going to last till 2055, or 37 years from its beginning. India's working-age population is now increasing because of rapidly declining birth and death rates.
- India's age dependency ratio, the ratio of dependents to the working-age population, is expected to only start rising in 2040, as per UN estimates. This presents a golden opportunity for economic growth.
- It is, however, important to note that this change in population structure alone cannot push growth. There are many other factors.

Significance

- Demographic dividend: The economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population's age structure, mainly when the share of the working-age population is larger than the non-working-age share of the population.
- This bulge in the working-age population is going to last till 2055, or 37 years from its beginning, 2018.
- No of working population increases - the output goes up if jobs are provided.
- Taxes increase with govt - more investment.
- Aggregate demand goes up - buying cars, consumer durables.
- Saves money & invest money

Challenges to reap the benefits:

- Should be able to utilise - health, education, skilled, opportunities available.
- Role of institutions in framing right policies.
- Regional Disparity: Kerala is already there, AP, Delhi - opening up & Bihar, UP yet to reach demographic peak.
- Inequality: Dependence on social background, pockets of economic growth in the same cities.
- Technical divide: It would be difficult to transition from agriculture to technology rather than manufacturing.
- Urban infrastructure: We are not able to handle migration. (Slums in Delhi with a lot of disease threats and it lower productivity).
- Female labour force participation: it has decreased from 27.5% to 19% while in China it is 63%.

Government Schemes that influence the demography:

- Health: Ayushman Bharat, goal of eradicating TB, reduction in Communicable & non -communicable diseases.
- Pension Scheme for Organised.
- PM KISAN Samman Nidhi
- National population policy.
- Bet Bachao Beti Padhao -to deal with low Sex ratio

Best way forward:

- Using Technology: it's opening up many new sectors for jobs, to enhance productivity in agriculture, services & manufacturing sector.
- Skill development: re-education & reskilling - should be government funded.
- Invest in health, education, nutrition, girl's education, and family planning services.
- Short term: Policing, teachers, Medium term focus on manufacturing & long term look into technical aspect & its disruption.
- Increasing the access to education.
- Economic Survey focuses on the Consolidation of schools as we already hit the 0-19 yrs peak on demography.
- China focused on basic education & then moved them to the production process.
- Population Control through family planning & tackling unmet need of contraception.
- Social determinants like - son at preference need to change.
- Services to elderly: by increasing the retirement age.

3. On Kashmir-NO third Party

GS Paper 2& 3 [Governance, Bilateral issue, internal security]

Context:

- An influential Democratic Congressman apologised to India's US envoy for President Donald Trump's "embarrassing" remarks on Kashmir, while several others came out in support of New Delhi's stand against any third-party role on the issue. "I just apologised to Indian Ambassador Harsh Shringla for Trump's amateurish and embarrassing mistake," Congressman Brad Sherman tweeted hours after Donald Trump's stunning claim that Prime Minister Narendra Modi sought his mediation or arbitration efforts to resolve the Kashmir issue.
- India was quick to reject Donald Trump's claims. For the past 70 years, India has consistently resisted any third-party mediation proposal, and for over a decade now, the US has been reiterating that Kashmir is a bilateral issue.
- In a joint statement, Congressman George Holding and Congressman Brad Sherman, who are Co-Chairs of the Congressional Caucus on India and Indian Americans, asserted that Kashmir is a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan.

Background

- [The Kashmir conflict is a territorial conflict primarily between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir region. The conflict started after the partition of India in 1947 as a dispute over the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir and escalated into three wars between India and Pakistan and several other armed skirmishes.
- China has also been involved in the conflict in a third-party role. Both India and Pakistan claim the entirety of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. India controls approximately 55% of the land area of the region and 70% of its population; Pakistan controls approximately 30% of the land, while China controls the remaining 15%. India administers Jammu, the Kashmir Valley, Ladakh, and the Siachen Glacier. Pakistan

administers Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

- China administers the mostly uninhabited Shaksgam Valley, and the Aksai Chin region.
- The Indo-Pakistani War of 1947 was fought over the accession of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir to India and resulted in a ceasefire with a front solidified along the Line of Control. After further fighting in the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965 and the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, the Simla Agreement formally established the Line of Control between the two nations' controlled territories.
- Accordingly, the Shimla Agreement was formulated and signed by the two countries, whereby the countries resolved to settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations and to maintain the sanctity of the Line of Control. Multilateral negotiations were not ruled out, but they were conditional upon both sides agreeing to them.
- To India, this meant an end to the UN or other multilateral negotiations. However Pakistan reinterpreted the wording in the light of a reference to the "UN charter" in the agreement, and maintained that it could still approach the UN. The United States, United Kingdom and most Western governments agree with India's interpretation.
- The Shimla Agreement also stated that the two sides would meet again for establishing durable peace. Reportedly Bhutto asked for time to prepare the people of Pakistan and the National Assembly for a final settlement.
- Indian commentators state that he reneged on the promise. Bhutto told the National Assembly on 14 July that he forged an equal agreement from an unequal beginning and that he did not compromise on the right of self-determination for Jammu and Kashmir. The envisioned meeting never occurred.]
- The question is will India appreciate third party involvement in the Kashmir issue resolution?
- No, India blatantly rejected any third party intervention in this regard.

India:

- India rejected the claim instantly and even got support from the US congress as India's position on the Kashmir issue is well known.
- Even the Heritage Foundation (Republican Think Tank) which is closest to Trump denied the statements made by Trump. Trump's statement can be said to blessing in disguise as now India can ignore the requests from other countries to try to resolve the issue.

What prompted Trump to make such a statement?

- He considers himself as the perfect mediator.
- He desperately wants to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

Pakistan's stand:

- Pakistan, in spite of the Shimla Agreement, leaves no opportunity to raise the issue on international platforms.
- It even got OIC to appoint an envoy on the Kashmir issue. It has been trying hard to internationalize the issue.
- There is an opinion in Pakistan that perhaps America can arm-twist India to make some concessions.

Criticism:

- Trump has made an outlandish statement and later was not clear of the facts.
- Trump has not done enough research on any topic.

India-US equations:

- Won't change anything.

- The relation will remain stable.
- The only issue is the increasing number of trade disputes.

Kashmir issue negotiations' impact so far:

- Third-party mediation- Last time was after 1965, hosted in Tashkent.
- No international mediation formally.
- Behind the scenes, nudging and friendly advice has been there.
- Never a sustained attempt.

What interest is Kashmir to the rest of the World?

- Kashmir is of interest only when events there lead to some kind of crisis or violence or anything which it's the world press.

How can the Kashmir issue be solved? Or the best way forward:

Two Dimensions-

- Internal dimension - Political will and understanding are required.
- External Dimension - Pakistan. Will has to be there to resolve as India only responds.
- Rather India should add proactively to put a squeeze on Pakistan.
- There won't be a better time to resolve the issue.
- The government should prepare a policy that has bipartisan and support throughout the country.