

CURRENT AFFAIRS
8TH TO 14TH OCTOBER 2018

NATIONAL HEALTH PROFILE 2018

Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare released an Analytical Report of the National Health Profile-2018 prepared by the Central Bureau of Health Intelligence (CBHI), under the aegis of the Directorate General of Health Services at Patna.

CBHI has been publishing National Health Profile every year since 2005. This is the 12th edition.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The National Health Profile covers **demographic, socio-economic, health status and health finance indicators, along with comprehensive information on health infrastructure and human resources in health.**
- There is a need of evidence-based planning on the launch of **the National Health Resource Repository (NHRR)** - country's first ever national healthcare facility registry of authentic, standardized and updated geo-spatial data of all public & private healthcare establishments.
- The vision of the NHRR project is to strengthen evidence-based decision making and develop a platform for citizen and provider-centric services by creating a robust, standardized and secured IT-enabled repository of India's healthcare resources.
- NHRR will be the ultimate platform for comprehensive information of both, Private and Public healthcare establishments including Railways, ESIC, Defense and Petroleum healthcare establishments.
- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is the project technology partner adhering to paramount Data Security.
- The NHRR project involves conducting a national census for all public and private healthcare facilities including hospitals, doctors, clinics, blood banks, pharmacies, diagnostic labs etc.
- The aim of the project is to develop a comprehensive platform for over 25 lakh healthcare establishments.

BENEFITS

- NHRR will cohesively work with Ayushman Bharat - National Health Protection Mission (AB-NHPM) and Central TB Division (CTD) on an integrated plan for the larger benefit of ensuing Hospital empanelment and private sector engagement.
- This web-based database of healthcare resources with visualization will immensely support the healthcare policy makers to enable evidence-based decision making to strengthen the Indian health system.
- Benefits of the NHRR project are to create a reliable, unified registry of country's healthcare resources showing the distribution pattern of health facilities and services between cities and rural areas.
- Additionally, it shall generate real-world intelligence to identify gaps in health and service ratios, and ensure judicious health resource allocation and management.
- It shall identify key areas of improvement by upgrading existing health facilities or establishing new health facilities keeping in view the population density, geographic nature, health condition, distance, etc.

INDIA INTERNATIONAL SILK FAIR 2018

6th edition of India International Silk Fair (IISF) held in New Delhi on October 16, 2018.

India is the 2nd largest producer of silk in the world. The silk industry is agriculture based and labour intensive and provides gainful employment to around 8 million artisans and weavers in rural areas.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The fair will give a platform to exporters to display their products and to overseas buyers an opportunity to place orders and source their merchandize.
- The IISF-2018 is expected to generate business of over USD 20 million for the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) engaged in producing silk and blended silk garments, fabrics, accessories and floor covering.
- The Central Silk Board is putting up a Theme Pavilion showcasing the future vision of Indian Silk Industry.

SOVEREIGN GOLD BONDS

Government of India, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India, Sovereign Gold Bonds 2018-19 (Series II) will be opened for the period October 15-19, 2018.

HIGHLIGHTS

- SGBs are government securities denominated in grams of gold.
- They are substitutes for holding physical gold.
- Investors have to pay the issue price in cash and the bonds will be redeemed in cash on maturity.
- The Bond is issued by Reserve Bank on behalf of Government of India.
- Persons resident in India as defined under Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 are eligible to invest in SGB. Eligible investors include individuals, HUFs, trusts, universities and charitable institutions.
- The Bonds are issued in denominations of one gram of gold and in multiples thereof.
- Minimum investment in the Bond shall be one gram with a maximum limit of subscription of ***4 kg for individuals, 4 kg for Hindu Undivided Family (HUF) and 20 kg for trusts*** and similar entities notified by the government from time to time per fiscal year (April – March).
- The Bonds bear interest at the rate of ***2.50 per cent*** (fixed rate) per annum on the amount of initial investment.
- Interest will be credited semi-annually to the bank account of the investor and the last interest will be payable on maturity along with the principal.
- The Gold Bond scheme has a tenure of eight years, with exit options in the 5th, 6th and 7th year
- The gold bond can be used as collateral to avail a loan.
- Capital gain tax will be exempted on redemption.
- Investing in the Gold Bond scheme helps as there will be zero risk from handling physical gold.
- Bonds are sold through offices or branches of Nationalised Banks, Scheduled Private Banks, Scheduled Foreign Banks, designated Post Offices, Stock Holding Corporation of India Ltd. (SHCIL) and the authorised stock exchanges either directly or through their agents.

FMCBG MEETING

The Final G-20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors Meeting under the 2018 Argentine Presidency and the final BRICS Deputies Meeting under the 2018 South African Chairmanship were held on 11th -12th October 2018 in Bali, Indonesia on the sidelines of the IMF/Fund Bank Annual Meetings.

G-20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors (FMCBG) Meeting

- The deliberations in the G-20 FMCBG meeting centred on key risks facing the ***global economy, enhancing a resilient international financial architecture, financing infrastructure development, progress on compact with Africa as well as streamlining of the GPFI process.***
- The risks related to ***trade tensions, financial vulnerabilities and oil prices*** have materialized and are having major impact on the Emerging Market Economies.
- Secretary (EA) also highlighted the efforts undertaken by India to attract private players in infra financing space such as creating Real Estate Investment Trust Fund, Infrastructure Debt Fund as well as undertaking efforts for monetizing brownfield assets.
- On Compact with Africa, Secretary (EA) indicated the importance that Government of India (GoI) has placed on undertaking investments in Africa and highlighted the USD10 billion soft loan facility announced for Africa.
- It was further highlighted that the investment facilitating schemes that GoI has in place to encourage private players to invest in Africa and elsewhere such as National Export Insurance Fund, Concessional Financing Facility etc.

BRICS Finance Deputies

The meeting focused on reviewing the progress achieved by the BRICS Forum in 2018 as well as deliberating on the way forward under the upcoming 2019 BRICS Chairmanship of Brazil.

On the Finance Ministry track, the main issues that came-up for discussion were the membership ***expansion of New Development Bank (NDB), the staggering of schedule of payment of paid-in capital of NDB, the work of BRICS PPP Task Force and examining the possibility of developing a consensus on BRICS Rating Agency.***

On the Central Bank track, the discussions centred on the test run of the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement undertaken by the Central Banks in 2018, the Fintech stocktaking exercise and the progress of work happening in the BRICS Bond Fund Working Group.

LAND POLICY

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has notified the modified land policy.

BACKGROUND

The policy would be applicable in the urbanizable areas of urban extensions in 95 villages of Delhi. The policy replaces the earlier policy notified in the year 2013. It aims at developing smart and sustainable neighbourhoods, sectors and zones, planned and executed as per the availability of water, power and other infrastructure.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The core of the policy is active role of private sector and farmers also involved in assembling land and developing physical and social infrastructure.
- Owners or group of owners can pool land parcels for development as per prescribed norms.
- Land Parcels of any size can participate under the policy. However, the minimum land to be pooled is 2 hectares to ensure adequate return of land for development and form a Developer Entity.
- DDA will now play the role of a facilitator and the process of planning, pooling and development will be taken up by Developer Entities/ Consortiums.
- For smooth planning and development of infrastructure, integrated Sector-based planning approach shall be followed.
- A minimum of 70% contiguous land of the developable area within a sector, free of encumbrances is required to be pooled to make the sectors eligible for development under the Policy.
- Differential land return in two categories as per the earlier policy has been replaced with uniform division of land on **60:40** basis in the modified Policy.
- The Consortium will retain 60% of pooled land and hold the remaining 40% on behalf of DDA.
- Consortium can utilize **60% of pooled land** for development of residential, commercial, public and semi-public facilities as per the policy and MPD-2021 provisions.
- The remaining **40% of the pooled land** is to be surrendered, free of encumbrances, as and when required to DDA/service providing agencies to undertake developmental work.
- To keep pace with new forms of development, provision for achieving a **vertical mix of uses (residential, commercial, public and semi-public)** at building level is introduced.
- Additional Development Controls have been introduced to regulate building and infrastructure aspects of developments.
- A **Single Window System** is being created for implementation of policy in DDA. All processes of receiving applications, verifications, grant of approvals and licenses, etc. shall be online and will be completed in a time bound manner. A two-stage Grievance Redressal Mechanism within DDA has been introduced for clear operationalization and implementation of the policy.

HUMAN CAPITAL INDEX

The World Bank released a Human Capital Index (HCI) as part of the World Development Report 2019.

Broader theme of the World Development Report (WDR) this year is “**The Changing Nature of Work**”.

HIGHLIGHTS

- As part of this report, the World Bank has launched a **Human Capital Project (HCP)**.
- The HCP programme is claimed to be a program of advocacy, measurement, and analytical work to raise awareness and increase demand for interventions to build human capital.
- There are three components of HCP- a cross-country human capital measurement metric called the Human Capital Index (HCI), a programme of measurement and research to inform policy action, and a programme of support for country strategies to accelerate investment in human capital.
- The HCI has been constructed for 157 countries.
- It claims to seek to measure the amount of human capital that a child born today can expect to attain by age 18. The HCI index values are contended to convey the productivity of the next

generation of workers, compared to a benchmark of complete standard education and full health.

- The HCI has **three components**:
 - a) Survival, as measured by under-5 mortality rates,
 - b) Expected years of Quality-Adjusted School which combines information on the quantity and quality of education (quality is measured by harmonizing test scores from major international student achievement testing programs and quantity from number of years of school that a child can expect to obtain by age 18 given the prevailing pattern of enrolment rates across grades in respective countries) and
 - c) Health environment using two proxies of (a) adult survival rates and (b) the rate of stunting for children under age 5.

UNDP constructs Human Development Index (HDI) for several years.

- The HCI uses survival rates and stunting rate instead of life expectancy as measure of health, and quality-adjusted learning instead of merely years of schooling as measure of education.
- HCI also ***excludes per capita income*** whereas the HDI uses it.
- Two significant changes from HDI are exclusion of income component and introduction of quality adjustment in learning.
- Exclusion of income element and introduction of quality adjustment makes HCI far less representative of Human Capital Development than the Index claims it to be.

The first HCI published today at the Annual Meetings of the Fund Bank comes with a conclusion that for 56% of the world's population the HCI is at or below 0.50; and for 92% it is at or below 0.75. Hence only 8% of the population can expect to be 75% as productive as they could be.

- The HCI measures the Index outcomes for each country as a fraction of maximum value of 1.
- As expected the advanced economies such as North America and Europe mostly have HCI value of above 0.75, while South Asia and Sub Saharan Africa have the lowest HCI among the regions.
- The HCI for India has been estimated at 0.44. The quality adjusted learning has been measured in case of India by using the data as old as 2009.

HCI FOR INDIA

- **Human Capital Index:** A child born in India today will be only 44 per cent as productive when she grows up as she could be if she enjoyed complete education and full health.
- The HCI in India for females is marginally better than that for males.
- **Probability of Survival to Age 5:** 96 out of 100 children born in India survive to age 5.
- **Expected Years of School:** In India, a child who starts school at age 4 can expect to complete 10.2 years of school by her 18th birthday.
- **Harmonized Test Scores:** Students in India score 355 on a scale where 625 represents advanced attainment and 300 represents minimum attainment.
- **Learning-adjusted Years of School:** Factoring in what children actually learn, expected years of school is only 5.8 years.
- **Adult Survival Rate:** Across India, 83 per cent of 15-year olds will survive until age 60.
- **Healthy Growth (Not Stunted Rate):** 62 out of 100 children are not stunted. 38 out of 100 children are stunted, and so at risk of cognitive and physical limitations that can last a lifetime.
- **Gender Differences:** In India, HCI for girls is marginally higher than for boys.

COMPETITION COMMISSION OF INDIA

The Competition Commission of India (CCI), in continuation of its efforts towards simplifying and providing greater clarity on the application of the combination provisions of the Act and the Combination Regulations, has further amended the Combination Regulations on 09th October 2018.

The Competition Act, 2002, as amended by the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2007, prohibits anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises and regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control and M&A), which causes or likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.

HIGHLIGHTS

- This amendment inter alia provides certainty & transparency and expedites faster disposal of combination cases before CCI.
- The provisions of the Competition Act, 2002 (“Act”) relating to the regulation of combinations as well as the Combination Regulations have been in force with effect from 1st June 2011.

COMPETITION COMMISSION OF INDIA

The Competition Commission of India (CCI) was established under the Competition Act, 2002 for the administration, implementation and enforcement of the Act, and was duly constituted in March 2009. Chairman and members are appointed by the central government.

OBJECTIVES

- To prevent practices having adverse effect on competition.
- To promote and sustain competition in markets.
- To protect the interests of consumers.
- To ensure freedom of trade.

It is the duty of the Commission to eliminate practices having adverse effect on competition, promote and sustain competition, protect the interests of consumers and ensure freedom of trade in the markets of India.

The Commission is also required to give opinion on competition issues on a reference received from a statutory authority established under any law and to undertake competition advocacy, create public awareness and impart training on competition issues.

WORLD POST DAY

World Post Day marks the creation of the Universal Postal Union (UPU) in 1874.

BACKGROUND

With the nation-wide launch of 650 branches and 3250 access points of IPPB, the Postman has now become a banker to millions of unbanked and under-banked Indians who have so far had no access to financial services. More than 12 lakh IPPB accounts have been opened so far, with a balance of more than Rs. 13 crores. All the 1.55 lakh Post Offices in the country will be linked to the IPPB system by December 31, 2018.

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

- The benefits of the ***Postal Life Insurance (PLI)*** product have now been extended to doctors, engineers, management consultants, CAs, architects, teachers, lawyers, and bankers, as well as employees of companies listed on the NSE and BSE.
- More than 1600 villages in the country have been covered under the ***Sampoorna Bima Gram (SBG) Yojana***, providing financial security to more than two lakh families in these villages.
- Of the 1.46 crore ***Sukanya Samridhi Accounts*** opened in the country so far, 1.27 crore accounts reside with Post Offices.
- The Department has also launched creative initiatives such as the ***Deen Dayal Scholarship for Promotion of Aptitude and Research in Stamps as a Hobby (SPARSH)***, under which 841 students were awarded scholarships during the year 2017-18.
- The setting up of a ***new Parcel Directorate*** in the department to focus on the parcel business which has undergone a radical transformation with the emergence of the e-Commerce business in the country.

UNIVERSAL POSTAL UNION

- It is a specialized agency of United Nations that coordinates postal policies among member nations, in addition to worldwide postal system.
- It was established in 1874 and is second oldest international organization worldwide after International Telecommunication Union (ITU) which was established in 1865. It is headquartered in Berne, Switzerland.
- It has 192 members country.
- It is primary forum for cooperation between postal sector players among member countries.
- It helps to ensure truly universal network of up-to-date products and services.
- It sets rules for international mail exchanges and makes recommendations for growth in mail, financial and parcel services volumes and also to improve quality of service for customers

APP MED-WATCH

On the occasion of 86th anniversary, the Indian Air Force has launched an innovative mobile health App named 'MedWatch' in keeping with the vision of 'Digital India, Ayushman Bharat and Mission Indradhanush'.

The app is conceived by the doctors of IAF and developed in house by Directorate of Information Technology (DIT) with ZERO financial outlay.

HIGHLIGHTS

- 'MedWatch' will provide correct, Scientific and authentic health information to air warriors and all citizens of India.
- The app comprises of host of features like information on basic First Aid, Health topics and Nutritional Facts; reminders for timely Medical Review, Vaccination and utility tools like Health Record Card, BMI calculator, helpline numbers and web links.
- 'MedWatch' is the first mobile health app in the three-Armed Services.
- The MedWatch mobile health app is an Indian Air Force initiative and a small contribution to our citizen.

INTER STATE RIVER WATER DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The Centre is planning to bring a legislation to fast-track inter-state river water dispute resolution and also better manage work on 13 river basins across the country.

- The proposed River Basin Management Bill will replace the River Boards Act 1956. The legislation proposes to set up 13 river-basin authorities.
- Each authority will have a two-layer system comprising a **governing council and an executive board**.
- The chairperson of the governing council will be the Chief Ministers from the river-basin States, who will share the post on rotation.
- The Bill also envisages that the Chief Ministers meet twice a year.
- Seeking to speed up inter-state river water dispute resolution among states and manage affairs of 13 river basins across the country through an exclusive Master Plan for each of them.
- The move will bring a new concept of '**basin approach**' to build capacity and resolve conflicts through cooperation at state level.

The proposed River Basin Management Bill, 2018 seeks to set up 13 River Basin Authorities. Each authority will have a two-tier system, consisting of a governing council and an executive board. The council will comprise of chief ministers of all states within particular basin.

The authorities will be set up for river basins of **Ganga, Indus, Godavari, Mahanadi, Mahi, Narmada, Pennar, Cauvery, Krishna, Tapi, Subarnrekha, Brahmani-Baitarini and Brahamaputra-Barak-inter-state rivers** of north-east.

ISSUES WITH DNA BILL

This DNA Bill is the latest in a series that originated as the “DNA Profiling Bill” in 2007. Since then, the proposed law has gone through multiple iterations – with each version raising privacy concerns, such as the lack of adequate standards for consent, notice, retention and security of data.

CONCERNS

1. For instance, the Bill allows the state, through its law enforcement agencies, to collect “**intimate bodily substances**” from citizens with very questionable standards to protect their privacy.
2. The **consent mechanism** under the DNA Bill appears to be entirely superficial. While it requires citizens to consent to the collection of their bodily substances, **it does not define the term “consent”** and provides no safeguards against forcibly obtained, unclear or uninformed consent.
3. Further, even this low standard for consent is not considered paramount under the DNA Bill since a citizen’s refusal to give their consent to collection of their DNA can be overridden by a magistrate’s orders.
4. To make matters worse, there is no provision for notice under the DNA Bill, meaning that requests for acquiring a citizen’s consent for collection of DNA are not required to adequately inform citizens of the purposes for the collection of their DNA, the uses that it could be put to or of the consequences of such collection for them.

OVERVIEW

The shortcomings under the Bill pose a serious threat to the right to privacy, which was recognised as a fundamental right by the Supreme Court in **Puttaswamy vs Union of India**. The court in its

seminal ruling had mandated a comprehensive data protection law to give effect to the constitutional right to privacy. Subsequently, the Committee of Experts on Data Protection (“Srikrishna Committee”) came out with the Personal Data Protection Bill to provide an overarching statutory framework to enable the fundamental right to privacy through mandatory data protection norms.

ISSUES RELATED TO PRIVACY

However, privacy violations under the DNA Bill cannot be addressed under the PDP Bill since **section 43 of the PDP Bill** exempts laws involving the investigation and prosecution of offences from compliance with its strict data protection safeguards.

This section exemplifies one of the core criticisms against the PDP Bill, which is that it provides substantial leeway to processing of personal data by government agencies. In doing so, it skews the state-citizen relationship by granting the government with exemplary powers over citizens. Such powers are liable to be abused for impermissible surveillance of citizens by the state.

Fortunately, despite being exempt from the overarching statutory framework under the PDP Bill, the DNA Bill will still have to satisfy the **constitutional three-part test of legality, necessity and proportionality** as prescribed in **Puttaswamy v. Union of India**. The DNA Bill will satisfy the test of legality if it is passed by the parliament, as legality includes authorisation by the parliament through a valid law.

However, the provisions under the Bill will have to establish necessity, meaning that the law must be necessary for fulfilling a legitimate state purpose and proportionality of the proposed measures in order to pass constitutional muster. The Supreme Court has not yet prescribed any standards for necessity and proportionality in context of the fundamental right to privacy since Puttaswamy.

FOREST FIRES

A joint report on forest fires released recently by the Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climate Change and the World Bank contains two telling findings on the distribution of such fires.

HIGHLIGHTS

- In terms of frequency of forest fires, 16 of the top 20 districts are in the Northeast. And in terms of area, almost half of the affected area is in just 20 districts; the largest affected area is in Central India.
- At least 60 per cent of districts in India are affected by forest fires each year.
- The top 20 districts in terms of area affected by fire from 2003 to 2016 account for 48 per cent of the total fire-affected area.
- In line with other parts of the world, people are the main driver of fires in India and forest fires are distributed close to people and infrastructure.
- Forest fires contribute to climate change by releasing carbon stored in trees, undergrowth and soil into the atmosphere.
- **The findings are crucial for India’s own commitment to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of Co2-equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.**
- Though the MoEFCC issued national guidelines on **Forest Fire Prevention and Management (FFPM) in 2000**, these are no longer being implemented. The report is expected to be a key input in issuing a national policy on FFPM.

CONCERNS

- Over the longer term, shifts in climate caused by anthropogenic global warming may further alter India's forest landscape and fire regime.
- Noting that India's monsoons are largely responsible for the seasonal nature of forest fires in the country, the report pointed out that forest fires peak during the dry months of March or April before the arrival of the monsoon, and the fire season mainly occurs during the four-month period between February 15 and May 15.
- The report observed that the reduced contrast in **land-sea temperatures** had weakened the engine that drives the monsoon, however, "It is not clear how the drying of the monsoon has affected the intensity or frequency of forest fires."

The report also referred to scientists from the **National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC)**, who found evidence of fires affecting forests with significant ecological value. "Between 2006 and 2015, the authors report that forest fires were detected in just under half (281 of 614) of the protected areas in India. In the year 2014, fires burned about 8.6 per cent of forest cover in protected areas".

LIMITING GLOBAL WARMING TO 1.5 °C

In its report released at the end of a meeting in Seoul, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has made projections for how the rise in global average temperatures can be restricted within 1.5°C of pre-industrial times.

HIGHLIGHTS

- As reported has presented four possible pathways, they involve **Carbon Dioxide Removal (CDR)** in varying amounts.
- The pathways account separately for contributions of **fossil fuel and industry, Bioenergy with Carbon Capture and Storage (BECCS), and removals in the Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use (AFOLU)**.
- **In each pathway**, the global average temperature is projected to overshoot the 1.5°C target by some amount before returning to that level by the end of this century. Each looks at a different scenario of the global energy demand:

P1: A scenario in which social, business, and technological innovations result in lower energy demand up to 2050 while living standards rise, especially in the global South. A down-sized energy system enables rapid decarbonisation of energy supply. **Afforestation is the only CDR option considered; neither fossil fuels with CCS nor BECCS are used.**

P2: A scenario with a broad focus on sustainability including energy intensity, human development, economic convergence and international cooperation, as well as shifts towards sustainable and healthy consumption patterns, low-carbon technology innovation, and well-managed land systems with limited societal acceptability for BECCS.

P3: A middle-of-the-road scenario in which societal as well as technological development follows historical patterns. Emissions reductions are mainly achieved by changing the way in which energy and products are produced, and to a lesser degree by reductions in demand.

P4: A resource and energy-intensive scenario in which economic growth and globalization lead to widespread adoption of greenhouse-gas intensive lifestyles, including high demand for

transportation fuels and livestock products. Emissions reductions are mainly achieved through technological means, making strong use of CDR through the deployment of BECCS.

GLOBAL HUNGER INDEX 2018

India is second after South Sudan, a conflict-laden country, when it comes to wasting (low weight for height) among children. This has come out in Global Hunger Index.

The findings of the 2018 Global Hunger Index—published jointly by **Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe**—are based on assessment of four criteria: **undernourishment (insufficient calorie intake), child stunting (too short for one’s age), child wasting and child mortality.**

HIGHLIGHTS

- India has been ranked at 103rd position out of 119 countries. Except Pakistan, all other neighbours are in better position as compared to India.
- Nepal was ranked 72nd, Sri Lanka 67th and Bangladesh was ranked 86th among all 119 countries.
- Underlining poor health of children in India, the report points out that **wasting has increased in the last two decades.** In 2000, 17.1 per cent children under five years were wasted. Their percentage has now increased to 21.
- As mentioned before, India is second (21 per cent) after South Sudan where 28.6 per cent of children are wasted.
- The report says, **“South Asia’s child wasting rate constitutes a critical public health emergency.**
- South Asia and Africa south of the Sahara have high prevalence of all four poor health standards.
- The report claims that undernourishment rate has marginally increased in Africa, especially, south of the Sahara. In 2015–2017, undernourishment rate was 22 per cent, the highest among all other regions.
- Though hunger has gone down in terms of percentage, it is still increasing in actual number. As per the report, approximately **124 million people suffer from acute hunger,** a steep increase from 80 million, two years ago.
- At present, the world has **151 million stunted and 51 million wasted children.**
- The report harps on the fact that **conflict, climate change and poor governance** are threatening hard-won gains.

Based on the trend, the report predicts that the world is not going to achieve zero hunger targets by 2030 as it had committed in 2015.

INDIA LOSES NATURAL RESOURCES TO ECONOMIC GROWTH

Growth doesn’t always come at a price. But it did when it comes to India’s economic growth, which took a toll on its natural assets like forests, food, clean air, etc. A report on environment accounts released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has revealed this state.

HIGHLIGHTS

- As per report, that when the average growth rate of gross state domestic product (GSDP) during 2005-15 for almost all the states was around 7-8 per cent, 11 states registered a decline in their **natural capital.**

- While 13 states showed a marginal growth in the range 0-5 per cent, just three states saw their natural capital increase by more than 5 per cent. This model of economic growth may not let the country sustain the rate of development for long.
- **Monitoring the natural capital** is important and should be one of the determiners for sustainable development.
- **The natural capital are those elements of the nature that provide valuable goods and services to humans, such as the stock of forests, food, clean air, water, land, minerals, etc.**
- The **natural capital accounting (NCA) method** has been used, in this report, to account for income and costs associated with natural resource used, based on a framework approved by the **United Nations in 2012 called the System of Environmental Economic Accounts (SEEA).**
- The report also reveals few positive trends-
For example, **Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Kerala, Maharashtra and Odisha** show an increase in parameters such as **transition of fallow land to farmland, increase in forest cover along with growing carbon stock and new sources of minerals.** It, however, shows alarming effects of climate change, urbanisation and decline in forest resource.

MAJOR CONCERNS

1. Water: Less snow, glaciers, inland and coastal wetlands

Climate change has had a huge impact on water resources.

- The report shows a 24% decline in the area under snow and glacier in some states and also notes the impact of climate change on wetlands/water bodies in Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim and Jammu Kashmir.
- Moreover, unsustainable extraction of groundwater resources is causing a decline in the water levels in Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Odisha and Rajasthan.
- The country has used 62 per cent of the net available annual groundwater, which is a 58 per cent increase from 2004.

2. Forest: Reducing stock

In the last 6 years, the rate of growth of forest stock has reduced by more than 10% in almost all states.

- From 2006-07 to 2010-11, all states, except Goa and Sikkim, have shown such a decline.
- However, from 2010-11 to 2015-16, even though there was a marginal change in forest cover in Assam and Uttarakhand, growing stock has reduced by more than 10 per cent.
- But in the case of Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan, despite a marginal change in forest cover, growing stock has significantly increased by more than 10 per cent.
- In the northeast, total growing stock has decreased from 1122.12 million cubic metres (cum) in 2006-07 to 958.34 million cum in 2015-16. Arunachal Pradesh and Assam, which contribute around 58 per cent of growing stock in the northeast, have shown a significant reduction in growing stock within the forest.
- The country is dependent on imports wood and wood products to fulfil its domestic demand.
- So, the growing stock is a crucial forest resource, the decline of which may be a harbinger of trouble for the economy.

3. Urbanisation

- Conversion of agricultural land to meet needs of urban population will affect productive capacity.
- While mentioning the use of agricultural land for urbanisation, the report says that high rate of urban growth is likely to affect a productive capacity in states like Punjab, Haryana, Karnataka, Telangana and West Bengal.
- It calls for better utilisation of land in a sustainable manner to fulfil the demands of growing population without increasing the degraded land.

4. To sustainably use natural resources

- Several countries are compiling natural capital accounts (NCA) to make economic decision making on natural resources an informed process.
- They want to use NCA as the basis for compiling indicators to monitor progress of sustainability policies.
- India is participating in the Natural Capital Accounting and Valuation of Ecosystem Services project launched by the United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD).

According to MOSPI, this assessment of natural assets is a reminder of how important is sustainable use of natural resources and is likely to propel India on the path of compilation of ecosystem accounts. It adds that the Centre and state governments must prioritize actions to conserve and enhance natural capital.

GLOBAL GREEN ECONOMY INDEX

The Global Green Economy Index (GGEI) in 2018 measures the green economy performance of 130 countries and how experts assess that performance.

The GGEI performance index uses quantitative and qualitative indicators to measure how well each country performs on four key dimensions: leadership & climate change, efficiency sectors, markets & investment and the environment.

The GGEI is published by Dual Citizen LLC, a private U.S.-based consultancy, and supported through revenues generated by data subscriptions, licensing, partnership, and other consulting offerings, often focused on building customized measurement frameworks.

The Global Green Economy Index™ (GGEI) is a trademark of Dual Citizen LLC.

BACKGROUND

- The GGEI was the first green economy index, launched in 2010, and today is the most widely referenced product of its kind internationally, utilized by policymakers, international organizations, civil society and the private sector.
- Like many indices, the GGEI is used to benchmark performance, communicate areas that need improvement, and show diverse stakeholders how they too can promote progress.
- The GGEI is particularly relevant today as countries aiming to realize new emission reduction and sustainable development goals will require data and insight to identify the best pathways to a low carbon economy.

DEFORESTATION & FOREST DEGRADATION

Why reducing emissions from deforestation, forest degradation remains a challenge

BACKGROUND

Forests are important carbon sinks. Between 1990 and 2007, the world's forests stored about 2.4 gigatonnes of carbon per year. Limiting global temperature rise to 1.5°C by 2100 will not be possible without carbon sequestration by the forests. By 2050, the world would need to sequester and store 8 gigatonnes of carbon dioxide (GtCO₂) annually on average. But deforestation and degradation of forests is also account for more than 10 per cent of the world's total greenhouse gas emission—a major trigger for climate change.

Realising that forests have large mitigation impact on climate change, a global mechanism to tackle deforestation and forest degradation called **Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+)** was formalised in 2007 at the United Nations Conference of Parties (CoP) on climate change.

HIGHLIGHTS

- While more than 300 REDD+ initiatives have been implemented globally, “there is no convincing evidence to establish the contribution of REDD+ in halting or reversing global deforestation trends”.
- Reducing emissions from forest land-use change was touted to be more economical than reducing emissions from other sectors.
- However, the costs of REDD+ have proven to be much higher.
- The developing countries would need between US \$17 and \$28 billion per year to reduce global emissions from deforestation by 50 per cent between 2005 and 2030.
- The slowdown in political momentum in REDD+ and the global economic crisis have been held responsible for the poor quantum of REDD+ finance commitments post-2010.
- While the private sector, according to some experts, was expected to provide much of the REDD+ finance, its share has not exceeded 10 per cent of the total finance commitments during 2016-17.
- Moreover, questions have been raised on the way opportunity cost for REDD+ is calculated to compensate the cost of switching to more environment-friendly practices.

Why India struggles to implement REDD+

- Under its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, India proposes to create a carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tonnes of CO₂ by 2030 through the forestry sector. To that end, initiatives like the **Green India Mission** have been proposed to increase forest cover by 5 million hectares (mha) and improve forest quality in another 5 mha.
- While the country formulated a **Draft National REDD+ Policy** detailing the objectives, it lacked clarity on how the programme will be implemented.
- “The Draft Policy has been silent on the new forest management regime under the Forest Rights Act 2006,”.
- Even before REDD+ can be implemented in India, the country needs to take corrective measures to prevent diversion of thousands of hectares of forests to development projects.
- Similarly, the REDD+ rules developed under UNFCCC are difficult to implement due to complex and diverse forest governance issues across countries.

- The UNFCCC does not have enough funds for REDD+.
- The Green Climate Fund, considered the most popular financing option, has also failed to mobilise money from developed countries. This has also affected credibility of REDD+ under UNFCCC.

Key reforms needed in the REDD+ mechanism

- REDD+ can achieve synergy between climate change mitigation and equitable distribution of resources with forest-dwelling communities, it calls for “a bottom-up initiative owned largely by communities with technical and funding support from state/regional governments and national governments”.
- Resolving tenure issues before implementing REDD+ finds prominence in the list of recommendations. “Communities should not feel threatened about losing traditional access to their lands and forests through the REDD+ processes. In forest areas where community use is limited, state and national governments should take over in implementing REDD+”.
- Besides developing safeguards against **land grabbing and resource alienation**, India needs to ensure that at least 70 per cent of the payments from carbon revenues should be made directly to forest users as cash transfer.
- REDD+, should not become a “mechanism to promote exclusionary conservation where protected areas and their buffer zones form the major chunk of the project area”. Instead, REDD+ project areas should be a healthy mix of smallholder farms and sustainably managed forest areas, preferably by communities.

INDIA UNDER CONSTANT THREAT OF CYCLONES & COASTAL FLOODING

The North Indian Ocean over the Arabian Sea will witness an increase in the frequency of extremely severe cyclonic storms owing to anthropogenic warming, says the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s (IPCC) much-awaited Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The report was published after week-long deliberations by government representatives from 130 countries and 50 scientists in Incheon, South Korea.

HIGHLIGHTS

- “Coastal flooding by the sea is likely to cost thousands of billions of USD annually.
- Risks are projected to be highest in south and south-east Asia.
- Countries where at least 50 million people are exposed to sea level rise include China, Bangladesh, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Japan, Philippines, United States and Vietnam.
- Scientists, in a global-level analysis of rising sea levels published last year, estimated that even small amounts of sea level rise, at 5-10 centimetres, can double the frequency of extreme water level events—and this can happen as soon as 2030.
- According to a news report, **Shailesh Nayak, the former Union Earth Sciences Secretary**, had warned that cyclonic turbulence was expected to increase in the Arabian Sea owing to global warming.
- “Cyclones in the Arabian Sea are likely to increase in the near future.
- **Another study, a working paper published by National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER)**, suggested that coastal flooding, which will be caused by climate change-induced sea level rise, will disrupt global economy. And, this will cause huge shifts in the economic activity.

- By 2200, 1.46% of the global population will have to move to inland regions. They add that this movement of the population will cost the world quite a lot.
- India has been struggling with cyclones too. It recently fought off cyclonic storm Daye, which triggered heavy downpour accompanied by high velocity winds in Malkangiri in Odisha.

Now, environmentalists can only hope that the IPCC report's aim to strengthen the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty, is taken seriously.

GANGA TASK FORCE

The Ganga Task Force is a unit of the Territorial Army deployed in the services of the Ganga.

HIGHLIGHTS

- It consists of 3 companies of over 100 men each to be stationed at Kanpur, Allahabad and Varanasi, with the Battalion headquarters at Allahabad.
- It is formed with the approval of Ministry of Defence and trained by the Defence ministry.
- They will be in force till December 2020.
- **Mandates of the force -**
 - a) Crowd management during Kumbh Mela,
 - b) Spread awareness on keeping the river clean,
 - c) Stop people and industry from polluting the river,
 - d) Assisting during floods/natural calamity in the region,
 - e) Planting trees to check soil erosion and
 - f) Patrolling sensitive river areas for biodiversity protection.
- They have also been trained by the **Central Pollution Control Board** to measure the health of the river.

TERRITORIAL ARMY

- The Territorial Army is a part of Regular Army.
- It was set up after the Territorial Army Act was passed in 1948.
- Before Independence, British raised territorial army in 1920 with two wings - European wing and Indian Volunteers wing.
- Its present role is to relieve the Regular Army from static duties and assist civil administration and provide units as and when required.
- It assists regular army in dealing with natural calamities and maintenance of essential services in situations where life of the communities is affected or the security of the Country is threatened.
- Territorial Army units were actively involved in 1962, 1965 and 1971 operations.

ZIKA VIRUS

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) surveillance system has recently detected cases of Zika Virus in Jaipur.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Zika virus is a member of the virus family Flaviviridae.
- It is a mosquito-borne disease transmitted by Aedes mosquitoes.

- It can be passed from a pregnant woman to her foetus. Infection during pregnancy can cause certain birth defects.
- Zika infection during pregnancy can cause a birth defect of the brain called **microcephaly** and other severe brain defects.
- It is also linked to other problems, such as miscarriage, stillbirth, and other birth defects.
- There is no vaccine or medicine for Zika.
- The disease is currently being reported by 86 countries worldwide.
- Symptoms of Zika virus disease are similar to other viral infections such as dengue, which include fever, skin rashes, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain and headache.
- In India, the first outbreak was reported in Ahmedabad in January-February 2017 and 2nd outbreak in Krishnagiri district in Tamil Nadu.
- Both were successfully contained through intensive surveillance and vector management.
- According to WHO, Zika is no longer a public health emergency of international concern.

REPORT ON GLOBAL MENTAL HEALTH

The medical journal Lancet recently published a report at the first ministerial on global mental health hosted by the UK.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Mental ill health is on the rise worldwide and it causes massive amount of disability, early deaths and fuelling cycles of poverty.
- Most people with mental health problems do not receive care, which prolongs suffering and leads to colossal societal and economic losses.
- They are also often subjected to human rights abuses and discrimination.
- No other cause of suffering has been so profoundly neglected.
- The situation in India is on par with amongst the worst country-level mental health indicators in the world.
- In India, suicide is now the leading cause of death of young people.
- Alcohol use is blatantly promoted by commercial interests and its abuse has been relegated to a moral issue to be addressed by primitive, punitive policies rather than through a public health approach.
- People with severe mental health problems languish in horrific conditions in mental hospitals or on the streets.
- They were also severely deprived from under-nutrition to neglect that affect the development of the brain in childhood.
- There are virtually no community-based mental health services in the country.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) made specific references to mental health and substance use as targets within the health goal reflects this transformative vision.
- To help achieve these targets and the SDGs, the Commission outlines a comprehensive blueprint for action.
- Our approach to mental health must cover its full spectrum, from day-to-day wellness to long-term, disabling conditions.
- Knowledge to promote mental health, prevent mental disorders and enable recovery has to be used to benefit entire populations.

- Mental health is the product of psychosocial, environmental, biological and genetic factors interacting with neurodevelopmental processes, especially in the first two decades of our lives.
- Because our experiences in childhood and adolescence shape our mental health for life, it is crucial that these years unfold in nurturing environments, which promote mental health and prevent mental disorders.
- Rights based approach - Mental health should be respected as a fundamental right by putting people living with mental health problems at the centre of planning services.
- Everyone should be entitled to dignity, autonomy, care in the community and freedom from discrimination.

WAY FORWARD

- Mental health services must be scaled up as an essential component of universal health coverage.
- Barriers and threats to mental health, such as the pervasive impact of stigma, must be assertively addressed.
- New opportunities must be enthusiastically embraced, in particular those offered by the innovative use of community health workers and digital technologies to deliver a range of mental health interventions.
- Substantial additional investments must be urgently made, with special focus on research and innovation.
- This could be made by redistribution of budgets from large hospitals to district hospitals and community-based local services to efficiently use existing resources.
- Initiatives like Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram to the Mental Health Care Act provide a robust policy foundation for realising these aspirations in India.
- A genuine partnership of a diverse range of groups from the mental health and development communities to policy makers and civil society coming together could transform mental health across the country.

RASHTRIYA BAL SWASTHYA KARYAKRAM

- The Scheme was launched under **National Rural Health Mission** to screen and manage children from birth to 18 years of age for Defects at Birth, Deficiencies, Diseases and Developmental Delays including disabilities.
- All new-borns delivered at public health facilities and homes are screened for birth defects by health personnel and ASHA.
- The children in the age group of six weeks to six years include those attending Anganwadi centres and children in the age group of 6 years to 18 years enrolled in government and government aided schools are screened by dedicated Mobile Block Health Teams.
- The children identified with any health condition are then referred to an appropriate health facility for further management and linking with tertiary level institutions.
- The establishment of District Early Intervention Centre (DEIC) is also one of the components of the scheme.

MAKE II SCHEME

Department of Defence production under Ministry of Defence has recently cleared 31 projects and has given them in-principle approval under the Make-II scheme.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Make II Scheme corresponds to Make in India initiative in Defence production.
- The provision of 'Make' category in Defence procurement Procedure is a pillar for realising the vision behind Make in India.
- Make Scheme fosters indigenous capabilities through design & development of required defence equipment/product/upgrades by both public and private sector industry in a faster time frame.
- Make I scheme is Government-funded and the projects under 'Make-I' sub-category will involve Government funding of 90%.
- Make II scheme is Industry-funded and the projects involve development of products/equipment for which no government funding will be provided for development purposes.

HORIZON 2020

It is a joint project by Indian government and European Union to develop a next generation influenza vaccine to protect citizens worldwide.

HIGHLIGHTS

- It aims to develop cost-effective and affordable influenza vaccine rapidly without compromising quality.
- It is expected to contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 3 to ensure health and well-being for all and boost the Indian National Health Mission
- The project require minimum 3 applicants from European countries associated to Horizon 2020 and minimum 3 applicants from India.
- It is also open to applicants from other countries.

SINGPHAN WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Singphan wildlife sanctuary has been declared as Elephant reserve by the Government of Nagaland.

- With the approval of Government of India, it becomes the 30th Elephant reserve in the country.
- The reserve lies in the North-western part of the State of Nagaland.
- The declaration will boost the elephant conservation in the country especially north eastern region.

FREE & OPEN INDO-PACIFIC

US administration is pushing the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) strategy as its major economic initiative.

BACKGROUND

Many observers consider it as an initiative for gathering an anti-China alliance. The impression of the FOIP being a US-led anti-China alliance was strengthened by the existing security groupings like the Quad involving US, Japan, Australia and India. But the impression in itself could create exactly the same problems for it as the BRI is suffering from.

Several critics of the BRI have argued that availability of alternative sources of financing would have reduced the dependency of smaller countries on Chinese funds. They further argue that a multi-country initiative such as the FOIP can make a difference.

POTENTIAL MEMBERS

- From the US perspective, members would include its military partners in the Asia-Pacific region, such as Japan and Australia, as well as a major strategic partner like India, whom the US recognises as a defence partner.
- India's inclusion in the US FOIP is inevitable, given the US' visualising of Indo-Pacific as a geography engulfing the Indian Ocean.
- Japan, Australia and India are clearly the three most important strategic allies of the US in Asia.
- Any US plan to counterbalance Chinese influence particularly the ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) requires the active support of all the three countries.

FOIP & BRI

- The FOIP could hardly avoid being identified as an anti-China military grouping.
- An 'inclusive' FOIP is inherently counter-intuitive for a US administration that prefers handling economic relations bilaterally.
- US has announced strategic investments worth \$113.5 million in the Indo-Pacific, with particular emphasis on expanding digital connectivity, energy security and sustainable infrastructure.
- Cooperative projects were announced such as the 'Strategic Trade Authorisation Tier 1 Status' to India for export of high-technology items by American firms and LNG agreement with Japan.
- These steps indicate efforts by the US administration to secure greater market access for American businesses in key regional markets such as India and Japan.
- Such market access in recipient countries is focused on areas that can provide American businesses control over production of strategic assets like energy.
- This is exactly the same reason the Chinese investments in the BRI are criticised for.
- While advancing 'Made in China' is a core objective of the BRI, 'America first' appears to be a similar objective for the FOIP.

GIG ECONOMY

By definition, a "gig" means a project, task or assignment, for which a person is hired on-demand, and in most cases, by digital or virtual means.

Alongside the usual office-based workforce employed on a full-time basis, gig workers are now slowly but steadily becoming an indispensable part of companies of the 21st century, especially in the urban context.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Niche talents who have an in-depth understanding of new-age technologies and skills will be the "rock stars" or "gigsters" of this economy.
- In many progressive nations, the idea of gig economy has already made deep inroads. It is estimated through a LinkedIn study that by 2020, 43% of workers in the USA's labour market would be independent contractors or freelance workers.
- With the likes of ride-hailing platforms like Uber at the helm of this concept, India also is poised to embrace this culture to the fullest.
- As per a recent **PayPal report**, India currently contributes 1 out of 4 freelancers across the globe.

GIG ECONOMY

- Gig economy actually promotes the “**individual-based**” working culture, wherein one’s obligations towards a company or enterprise are minimal or negligible. for your career trajectory.
- The gig economy is also rendered unique as it offers gen-x to work on their own terms and a space for creativity to flourish; individuals who are a part of this obtain the freedom to opt working for projects which they are passionate about, and reject the rather mundane ones that are not aligned to their creative vision or skill sets.
- Whereas in the recent past, creative portfolios such as writing and editing or graphic designing have paved the way for the most numbers of freelancing opportunities, and consultancies and IT-related roles (programmers, developers) catered to contract jobs, other service sectors and industries are now catching up with the “gig economy” mandate.
- For instance, some sectors which are expected to give rise to a significant number of gig workers in the coming times include **construction, real estate, hospitality and tourism, and so on.**

As emerging technologies become all-encompassing and entwined in our daily work regime, digitized businesses are taking note of increasing preference by their employees for flexible work arrangement. It is also true that embracing the gig economy somewhat eliminates the need for in-house skilling or upskilling of their regular workforce. **Hence, the gig economy not only helps firms reduce internal financial pressures and bring in cost savings up to a great extent, but it also provides a win-win situation for both workers and organizations.**

BOND LADDERING

- This refers to an investment strategy where bonds with different maturity dates spread out into the future are used to build an investment portfolio.
- This is done in order to contain risk while reinvesting the money.
- When a certain bond investment matures, an investor looking for further returns has to find an alternative investment that would yield returns at least equal to his previous investment.
- If all bonds in his portfolio mature at the same time, it increases the amount of money that is exposed to reinvestment risk. This risk can be significantly minimised by diversifying investments across time.

BROWNIAN MOTION

- This refers to the random and erratic movement of microscopic particles that are suspended in any fluid, like water or oil.
- Brownian motion is the result of the impact of the random bombardment of microscopic particles by the variety of fast-moving molecules that constitute the fluid.
- Larger objects do not witness as much random movement as microscopic particles when suspended in various fluids.
- The phenomenon is named after the English botanist Robert Brown, who in 1827 discovered the molecular composition of matter through the observation of the random movement of pollen grains in a liquid.

GENERILITY PRINCIPLE

- This refers to the political belief that laws created by the state need to apply equally to all groups of people in order to avoid any form of discrimination.

- According to this principle, a law that applies to blacks, for example, must apply to whites as well.
- Proponents of the generality principle believe that this is essential to uphold fairness and justice in society.
- However, opponents of the principle believe that the principle would make sure that even bad laws apply to the entire population.
- This, they argue, would be far worse for the welfare of society as no group would then be able to escape from the destructive effects of poor laws.

THE DRAFT PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION BILL

On August 24, 2017, the Supreme Court declared the right to privacy a fundamental right, a ruling widely welcomed. But many transparency advocates also felt apprehension, fearing that the right to privacy — meant to protect citizens from arbitrary state and corporate surveillance — might be deployed first and foremost to shield authorities from scrutiny by citizens.

ACCOUNTABILITY CONCERNS

The Personal Data Protection Bill, 2018, drafted by the Srikrishna Committee, confirms these concerns.

- The Bill identifies “**personal data**” as any data that directly or indirectly identifies a person.
- It then calls for **amending clause 8.1.j of the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2005**.
- The clause currently exempts the following from disclosure: “information which relates to personal information, the disclosure of which has no relationship to any public activity or interest, or which would cause unwarranted invasion of the privacy of the individual unless the Public Information Officer is satisfied that the larger public interest justifies the disclosure. Provided that the information which cannot be denied to the Parliament or a State Legislature shall not be denied to any person.”
- The Srikrishna Committee suggests amending this clause to authorise public information officers, or PIOs, to deny information containing ‘personal data’, if they feel that such disclosure is likely to cause harm to **‘the data principal’**, and if such harm outweighs public interest. The Bill defines **‘data principal’** as whoever the data relates to.

ROLE OF RTI

- The RTI Act’s core aim is to bring accountability by making available public records that disclose the actions and decisions of specific, identifiable members of the political class and the bureaucracy.
- The Data Protection Bill extends the cloak of ‘personal data’ over all such information.
- It asks PIOs (now overwhelmingly appointed at junior levels) to weigh public interest against the potential for harm to those identifiable in public documents.
- The Bill defines harm expansively to include everything from **blackmail and bodily injury to loss of reputation, humiliation and “mental injury”**.
- The Bill ignores that another key aim of the RTI Act is **“containing corruption”**. By bringing corruption to light, dogged RTI users have served public interest and caused ‘harm’, in terms of the Bill, to those exposed.

GENERAL EDUCATION & SPECIALISED EDUCATION

The concept of general education and specialised education proceeding together needs to be widely adopted in India.

BACKGROUND:

Higher education in India has grown exponentially in recent years. A survey by the ***All India Survey on Higher Education*** published in July this year shows that the ***gross enrolment ratio (GER) was 25.8% in 2017-18***, up from 10% in 2004-05.

GER is the ratio (expressed as percentage), of the total enrolment within a country in a specific level of education, regardless of age, to the population in the official age group corresponding to this level of education.

There needs to be a debate on the content of higher education in HEIs. Just after Independence, a commission comprising educationists from India, the U.K. and the U.S., and chaired by Dr S. Radhakrishnan, was formed “to report on Indian University Education and suggest improvements and extensions that may be desirable to suit present and future requirements of the country”. Its report filed after its deliberations (December 1948-August 1949) came to be known as the **Radhakrishnan Commission Report (RCR)**.

RCR RECOMMENDATIONS

- The RCR recommended a well-balanced education with ‘general’, ‘liberal’ and ‘occupational’ components.
- The report advocated that general education and specialised/professional education should proceed together.
- The study of languages should be given equal importance as one communicated to the outside world only through the medium of language. Therefore, a lack of communication skills could be a handicap.
- The RCR drew inspiration from the emphasis on general education in universities in the U.S.

HIGHLIGHTS

- For higher education, the survey calculates the ratio for the age group 18 to 23 years. Internationally, the age group 18 to 22 is also used. For India, the Survey gives the corresponding figure as 30%.
- Though the GER for higher education in India is still less than what it is in developed countries, the growth rate is still quite impressive. The next step is to ensure that the outcome of academic programmes by higher education institutes (HEIs) is acceptable.

RCR AND NAP REPORTS

Recently this year, the National Academies Press (NAP) of the U.S. which represents the national academies of sciences, engineering and medicine published the report, “The Integration of the Humanities and Arts with Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine in Higher Education: Branches from the Same Tree”.

- One is immediately struck by the importance attached to ***the integration of Sciences, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Medicine and humanities*** in university teaching in both the RCR and NAP reports.

- As in the NAP's report, the purpose of higher education is to prepare graduates for work and life, as well as active and engaged citizenship — achieved only through the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies related to the profession they chose to specialise in and also written and oral communication skills, ability to work as a team, ethical decision making, critical thinking, and ability to apply knowledge in real world settings.
- The RCR, in turn, talked about including general education as an essential element. But the NAP report goes much beyond what the RCR states and advocates integrating the teaching of humanities in STEM.

CONCERNS IN INDIA

- HEIs are far from integrated. As far as the inclusion of elements of general education in the curriculum for undergraduates is concerned, the situation is mixed.
- Several engineering, and science education and research institutes have embedded general education programmes at the undergraduate level. Such programmes are missing in most university-affiliated science colleges.
- Rather, there are institutions that cater to a single stream which precludes the possibility of even an informal interaction between students and faculty with different specialisations.
- The focus of undergraduate education should be on classical disciplines, with enough credits for general education. Focus on specialisation can wait until the post graduate level.

FUTURE OF WORK IN INDIA: WEF

The "Future of Work in India" survey of 770 companies conducted by the WEF (World Economic Forum) included various sectors such as textiles, banking & financial services, transport & logistics, and retail.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Four out of five retail firms hire less than 10% women. Companies in India experiencing the highest growth prefer hiring men and technology-led job growth benefits men more than women.
- Notably, while one in three companies preferred hiring men, only one in 10 companies said they wanted to hire more women, accentuating the gender gap rampant in the country.
- The report found that just 2.4% of these have half or more female employees, and as many as 71% have fewer than 10%. Out of this 71%, 30% companies have no female employees, and another 32% have less than 5%. The sector-wise breakup showed that 79% companies in retail, and 77% in transport & logistics, have less than 10% female employees, while banking & finance companies have 61% female participation and textiles 64%.
- India's female workforce participation is mere 27% and stands 23% points lower than global average. Jobs in India are experiencing highest growth and companies are hiring women at only 26%. Women in India are entering workforce at a slower rate than current female workforce participation.
- More than 33% of the total companies said that they prefer to hire men, as compared to just over one-tenth that said that they are looking to hire more women going forward. In the last five years, the surveyed companies stated that they hired just 26% female workers in the job roles that saw the most growth, which is less than India's already low female labour force participation of 27%.

TASK FORCE FOR CLOSING SKILL GAP

The government has launched a task force for closing the skills gap in India, in collaboration with the World Economic Forum.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Task Force is the second country-led public-private collaboration of the World Economic Forum's Closing the Skills Gap Project after South Africa.
- The task force will bring together leaders from business, government, civil society and the education and training sectors to accelerate the future-proofing of education and training systems in the country.
- The goal of the Task Force is to develop an action plan to address skills gaps in India and make the Indian workforce ready for jobs of future.
- With more than half of our population in the working age, skills development will be critical to sustaining inclusive growth and development in India.
- The "**Closing the Skills Gap**" task force will be a significant step to accelerate the impact on skills development already achieved by bringing together relevant stakeholders to act collectively.

CLOSING SKILL GAP PROJECT BY WEF

- The Closing the Skills Gap Project aims to create global and national platforms to address current skills gaps and to reshape education and training for the future. It works at three levels:
 1. **Country implementation deep-dives**: At the national level, the Closing the Skills Gap Task Forces provides a platform for multi-stakeholder collaboration to close the skills gap and prepare for the future of work. Each Closing the Skills Gap Task Force brings together leaders from business, government, civil society, and education and training sectors to accelerate reskilling and upskilling efforts in the current workforce and the future-proofing of national education and training systems.
 2. **Global and regional knowledge exchange**: At the global level, an informal Global Alliance for Closing the Skills Gap provides an exclusive global platform for leaders and experts from business, government, civil society, and the education and training sectors to build consensus, share ideas, and identify preferred models and best practices.
 3. **Global business commitments**: With skilling, reskilling and upskilling becoming a clear "no-regret" move for addressing the flux in labour markets, there is a rapid movement of multinational businesses towards such efforts for their employees, communities and wider audience. Managed strategically, this can be impactful and a win-win for companies and workers alike. As a first step, the Forum is consolidating global business commitments with the goal to reach 10 million people by January 2020.

NATIONAL DOLPHIN RESEARCH CENTRE

India's and Asia's first Dolphin Research Centre will be set up on the banks of the Ganga river in Patna University campus in Patna, Bihar. It will be named- National Dolphin Research Centre (NDRC).

The announcement for the centre was made on the occasion of Dolphin day, observed in Bihar for protection and conservation of Gangetic river dolphin to create awareness to save endangered species.

- NDRC will play important role in strengthening conservation efforts and research to save endangered mammal whose population is decreasing.
- Bihar is home to around half of the country's estimated 3,000 dolphin population.

GANGETIC DOLPHIN

- The Ganges River dolphin, or susu, inhabits the Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna and Karnaphuli-Sangu river systems of Nepal, India, and Bangladesh.
- It is classified as endangered by the IUCN.
- This dolphin is among the four "obligate" freshwater dolphins – the other three are the baiji now likely extinct from the Yangtze river in China, the bhulan of the Indus in Pakistan and the boto of the Amazon River in Latin America.
- Although there are several species of marine dolphins whose ranges include some freshwater habitats, these four species live only in rivers and lakes.
- Being a mammal, the Ganges River dolphin cannot breathe in the water and must surface every 30-120 seconds. Because of the sound it produces when breathing, the animal is popularly referred to as the 'Susu'.

ENVIRONMENT POLLUTION (PREVENTION & CONTROL) AUTHORITY

Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has reconstituted Supreme Court-empowered Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA).

HIGHLIGHTS

- EPCA was constituted with the objective of 'protecting and improving' the quality of the environment and 'controlling environmental pollution' in the National Capital Region.
- The EPCA also assists the apex court in various environment-related matters in the region.
- EPCA is Supreme Court mandated body tasked with taking various measures to tackle air pollution in the National Capital Region.
- It was notified in 1998 by Environment Ministry under Environment Protection Act, 1986.
- **Besides the chairman, the EPCA has 14 members**, some of whom are the environment secretary of the National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCT), chairperson of the New Delhi Municipal Council, transport commissioner of the NCT, the commissioners of various municipal corporations of Delhi and professors at IIT Delhi and Jawaharlal Nehru University.

FUNCTIONS

- To protect and improve quality of environment and prevent and control environmental pollution in National Capital Region.
- To enforce Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) in NCR as per the pollution levels.

INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SECURITY ASSOCIATION

The Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) was awarded the 'ISSA Good Practice Award' for administrative solution for coverage extension at the 'Regional Social Security Forum for Asia and the Pacific' held recently at Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The award recognizes the measures taken by ESIC for extension of coverage of the Scheme for Promoting Registration of Employers and Employees (SPREE), reducing the rate of contribution rates for 24 months in newly implemented areas and raising the wage limit for coverage under the ESI Act.

ISSA

- The ISSA is the principal international organization for Social Security Organizations, Govts. and Departments of Social Security.
- The ISSA was founded in 1927 under the auspices of the International Labour Organization (ILO), Geneva.
- It promotes excellence in social security administration through professional guidelines, expert knowledge, services and support to enable its Members to develop dynamic social security systems.
- The ESI Corporation hosts ISSA Liaison Office for South Asia at New Delhi.
- The Liaison Office coordinates with the Member countries and Social Security Institutions in Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Iran on activities of ISSA related to social security.
- The regional social security forum for Asia and the Pacific is a triennial Forum, which is the most important social security event in the region.
- The International Social Security Association (ISSA) invites submissions for the ISSA Good Practices award for Asia and the Pacific regions, on the occasion of the triennial regional forum.

EURASIAN OTTER

Eurasian Otter one of the least-known of India's three Otter species in the Western Ghats after more than 70 years. While the species is widespread across Europe, northern Africa and several south Asian countries, it is not as frequently seen as smooth-coated or small-clawed otters in India.

FACTS

- Otters are members of the mammalian family called Mustelidae.
- They are shy and have elusive habits, adapting to a variety of habitats ranging from marine to freshwater environments.
- IUCN status is Near Threatened.
- It is protected under the Wildlife Protection Act (1972).
- Major threats to Asian otter population are loss of wetland habitats due to construction of largescale hydroelectric projects, conversion of wetlands for settlements and agriculture, reduction in prey biomass, poaching and contamination of waterways by pesticides.
- Poaching for pelt and other body parts that are believed to possess therapeutic properties. Few nomadic hunting tribes eat otter flesh.
- Reductions in prey biomass (fish stocks) and infrastructural developments have led to disappearance of otters from the many streams and rivers which were once major otter habitats.

SIR CHHOTU RAM

A 64-foot-tall statue of peasant leader Sir Chhotu Ram has been unveiled at his native village Sampla in Haryana's Rohtak district.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Sir Chhotu Ram, who was born on November 24, 1881, was regarded as a messiah of peasants and was instrumental in empowering farmers in pre-Independence era and getting pro-farmers law enacted.
- He had fought for farmers' rights during the British rule.
- On political front, he was a co-founder of the National Unionist Party which ruled all the time Panjab Province in pre-Independent India and kept Congress and Muslim League at bay.
- Chhotu Ram was awarded the title of 'Rao Bahadur'. He was knighted in 1937 and was popularly known as Deen Bandhu.
- His legacy has been evoked by the formation of a new party, the National Unionist Zamindara Party by guar farmers in Rajasthan in 2013.

CYCLONES

Cyclonic storm 'TITLI' has hit the Bay of Bengal and another cyclonic storm 'LUBAN' has hit the Arabian sea.

NAMING OF CYCLONES

- In September 2004, an international panel on tropical cyclones decided that countries from the region would each put in names, which would be assigned to storms in the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea.
- Eight countries — India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Sri Lanka and Thailand — participated and came up with a list of 64 names.
- In the event of a storm, the **Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre, New Delhi**, selects a name from the list.
- Citizens can submit names to the Director General of Meteorology, IMD, for consideration, but the weather agency has strict rules for the selection process.
- A name, for instance, 'should be short and readily understood when broadcast'.
- The names must also be neutral, 'not culturally sensitive and not convey some unintended and potentially inflammatory meaning'.
- Furthermore, on the account of the 'death and destruction' a storm in the Indian Ocean causes, their names are retired after use, unlike those in the Atlantic and Eastern Pacific lists, which are reused every few years.

CYCLONE CATEGORIES

Category 1: Wind and gales of 90-125 kph, negligible house damage, some damage to trees and crops.

Category 2: Destructive winds of 125-164 kph. Minor house damage, significant damage to trees, crops and caravans, risk of power failure.

Category 3: Very destructive winds of 165-224 kph. Some roof and structural damage, some caravans destroyed, power failure likely.

Category 4: Very destructive winds of 225-279 kph. Significant roofing loss and structural damage, caravans destroyed, blown away, widespread power failures.

Category 5: Very destructive winds gusts of more than 280 kph. Extremely dangerous with widespread destruction.

SEARN

Information Sharing Platform Gateway for South-East Asia Regulatory Network (SEARN) developed by Centre for Development of Advanced Computing has been launched. It will promote regulatory and health collaboration among the countries of the South-East Asia Region.

In the South-East Asia region in WHO, India is actively contributing & providing support for the SEARN to guarantee access to high-quality medical products.

SEARN

- The South East Asia Research Network (SEARN), based at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, is a platform to facilitate research collaboration.
- It provides a forum to support the communication and dissemination of research findings, highlight research areas and a network connecting people and collaborators outside with an interest in South East Asia.
- SEARN includes all ASEAN countries: Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei, Singapore, Timor-Leste (East Timor) and the Philippines.

OBJECTIVES

- Encourage communication and dissemination of research findings.
- Showcase ongoing research.
- Act as a news forum.

Communicable Diseases Policy Research Group: CDPRG is a multidisciplinary team based in Bangkok, Thailand, which conducts research in South East Asia, and beyond. It carries out research, with a focus on the diverse public health problems associated with communicable disease control internationally, that is in support of and for policy reform.

INDIA FOR HUMANITY INITIATIVE

Union Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has launched India for Humanity initiative to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and honour of his service to humanity. It will feature year-long series of artificial limb fitment camps in a number of countries spanning globe.

- For this initiative, MEA has collaborated with renowned charitable organisation Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti (BMVSS).
- Aims to provide physical, economic and social rehabilitation of differently-abled around world by helping them regain their mobility and dignity to become self-respecting and productive members of society.
- It focuses on Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of compassion, caring and service to humanity.

CITIZENSHIP STATUS TO GORKHA COMMUNITY

Ministry of Home Affairs has issued a clarification to the Government of Assam on the citizenship status of members of the Gorkha Community living in the State as per the Foreigners Act, 1946.

Recently, some cases of members of Gorkha community living in Assam were referred to the Foreigners Tribunals. Following this, a representation from the All Assam Gorkha Students' had approached the Union Home Ministry to solve the issue.

HIGHLIGHTS

In a communication to the Government of Assam, MHA has listed various provisions to obviate the difficulties faced by Gorkhas in the matter of Indian citizenship. These include:

- The members of the Gorkha community who were Indian citizens at the time of commencement of the Constitution, or those who are Indian citizens by birth, or those who have acquired Indian citizenship by registration or naturalization in accordance with the provisions of The Citizenship Act, 1955 are not “foreigners” in terms of section 2 (a) of The Foreigners Act, 1946 as well as The Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939, therefore, such cases will not be referred to the Foreigners Tribunals.
- Any member of the Gorkha community holding Nepalese nationality and who has arrived in India by land or air over the Nepal border even without a passport or visa and staying in India for any length of time shall not be treated as an illegal migrant if he/she is in possession of any of the identity documents namely the Nepalese Passport, Nepalese Citizenship Certificate, voter Identification card issued by the Election Commission of Nepal, limited validity photo-identity certificate issued by Nepalese Mission in India when deemed necessary and for children between age group of 10-18 years, photo ID issued by the principal of the school, if accompanied by parents having valid travel documents.
- No such document is required for children below the age group of 10 years, the communication added citing provisions of India-Nepal Treaty signed in 1950.
- The cases of members of Gorkha community falling within the parameters shall not be referred to the Foreigner Tribunals for opinion as to whether the person is a “foreigner” within the meaning of The Foreigners Act, 1946.
- Only those individuals, who have come from specified territories i.e. territories included in Bangladesh immediately before commencement of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 1985, to the State of Assam, and are not Indian citizens, can be referred to the Foreigners tribunals.

NATIONAL POLICY ON ELECTRONICS 2018

Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has issued draft ‘National Policy on Electronics 2018’ (NPE 2018) for Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) Sector of India.

Aim: To promote domestic manufacturing in entire value-chain of ESDM sector for spur economic development in the country. It also aims to double the target of mobile phone production from 500 million units in 2019 to 1 billion by 2025 to meet objective.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Create \$400 billion electronics manufacturing industry by 2025, with mobile phone devices segment accounting for three-fourths of production.
- It also includes targeted production of 1 billion mobile handsets by 2025, valued at \$190 billion (approximately Rs. 13 lakh crore) and also 600 million mobile handsets valued at \$110 billion (approximately Rs. 7 lakh crore) for export.
- It replaces existing incentive schemes like **Modified Special Incentive Package Scheme (M-SIPS)**, with schemes that are easier to implement such as interest subsidy and credit default guarantee etc.
- It also takes into consideration interest subsidy and credit default guarantee in order to encourage new units and in expansion of existing units in electronics manufacturing sector.

- It also proposes to push development of core competencies in all sub-sectors of electronics including electronic components and semiconductors, automotive electronics, defence electronics, industrial electronics, strategic electronics etc. It also proposes to set up 20 greenfield and three brownfield electronic manufacturing cluster projects have been sanctioned with project outlay of Rs 3,898 crore, including Rs 1,577 crore from Central Government.
- It proposes suitable direct tax benefits, including inter-alia investment-linked deduction under Income Tax (IT) Act for electronics manufacturing sector, for setting up of new manufacturing unit or expansion of an existing unit.
- The proposal includes increasing tax benefits on expenditure incurred on R&D, enhancing rate of duty drawback for electronics sector, reimbursement of state levies and other levies for which input tax credit is not available, allowing duty free import of second-hand capital goods for electronics hardware manufacturing etc.
- It also proposes cess on select electronic goods resources to promote certain critical sub-sectors of electronic manufacturing such as semiconductor wafer fabrication and display fabrication units.

WING LOONG II

China has agreed to sell 48 Wing Loong II high-end armed drones to Pakistan.

HIGHLIGHTS

- It is a high-end reconnaissance, strike and multi-role endurance unmanned aerial system, capable of being fitted with air-to-surface weapons.
- It is designed for both reconnaissance and strike missions.

ECONOMIC LOSSES, POVERTY & DISASTERS 1998-2017 REPORT: UN

UN has released a report titled 'Economic Losses, Poverty and Disasters 1998-2017'. It was compiled by the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction.

India suffered a whopping \$79.5 billion economic loss due to climate-related disasters in the last 20 years.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The report highlights the impact of extreme weather events on the global economy. It states that the years between 1998 to 2017 have seen a dramatic rise of 151% in direct economic losses from climate-related disasters.
- In terms of the impact of disasters on the global economy between 1998 and 2017, affected countries reported direct losses of \$2.908 trillion, more than twice of what was lost in the previous two decades.
- Extreme weather events now account for 77 % of total economic losses of \$2.245 trillion. This represents a "dramatic rise" of 151% compared with losses reported between 1978 and 1997, which amounted to \$895 billion.
- The greatest economic losses have been experienced by the US at \$944.8 billion, followed by China at \$492.2 billion, Japan at \$376.3 billion, India at USD 79.5 billion and Puerto Rico at USD 71.7 billion.

- Storms, floods and earthquakes place three European countries in the top ten nations for economic losses: France, \$48.3 billion; Germany, \$57.9 billion and Italy \$56.6 billion. Thailand with \$52.4 billion and Mexico at \$46.5 billion complete the list.
- In terms of occurrences, climate-related disasters also dominate the picture, accounting for 91 per cent of all 7,255 major recorded events between 1998 and 2017. Floods (43.4 per cent) and storms (28.2 per cent) are the two most frequently occurring disasters.
- During this period, 1.3 million people lost their lives and 4.4 billion people were injured, rendered homeless, displaced or in need of emergency assistance. 563 earthquakes, including related tsunamis, accounted for 56 per cent of the total deaths or 747,234 lives lost.

CONCERNS

The report concludes that climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of extreme weather events. The disasters will continue to be major impediments to sustainable development so long as the economic incentives to build and develop hazard-prone locations outweigh the perceived disaster risks.

UN OFFICE FOR DISASTER RISK REDUCTION (UNISDR)

- It was established in 1999 as dedicated secretariat to facilitate implementation of International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR).
- It is an organisational unit of UN Secretariat and is led by the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction (SRSR).
- It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- It is mandated by United Nations General Assembly resolution (56/195) to serve as focal point in United Nations system for coordination of disaster reduction and to ensure synergies among disaster reduction activities of United Nations system and regional organizations and activities in socio-economic and humanitarian fields.

100K GENOME ASIA PROJECT

A group of Indian scientists and companies are involved with a 100k Genome Asia project, led out of the Nanyang Technological University (NTU), Singapore, to sequence the whole genomes of 100k Asians, including 50,000 Indians.

HIGHLIGHTS

- A non-profit consortium called Genome Asia 100K has announced an ambitious plan to sequence 100,000 Asian individuals in hopes of accelerating precision medicine applications for Asian populations.
- It will also leverage on big data analytics and advances in data science and artificial intelligence. Participants from 12 South Asian countries and at least seven North and East Asian countries will be selected.
- In the first phase, the project will focus on creating phased reference genomes for all major Asian ethnic groups—representing a major step forward in understanding the population history and substructure of the region.
- The sequencing of 100,000 individual genomes will be paired with microbiome, clinical and phenotype information to allow deeper analysis of diseased and healthy individuals in the context of inferred local ancestries.

- With recent insights into the genome diversity of Asian ethnicities, it will become possible to understand the biology of disease in the currently under-studied Asian populations that represent 40 percent of humankind.
- Furthermore, the unique genetic diversity prevalent in South, North and East Asia provides a valuable source of clinical insights that should enhance our understanding of several rare and inherited diseases, as well as chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes and cardiovascular disease.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR DISASTER REDUCTION

International Day for Disaster Reduction was observed on October 13th.

The theme of the 2018 International Day for Disaster Reduction was '***Reducing Disaster Economic Losses***'.

The 2018 theme continues as part of the "Sendai Seven" campaign, centred on the seven targets of the Sendai Framework. This year focuses on Target C of the Sendai Framework, which is, 'reducing disaster economic losses in relation to global GDP by 2030'.

BACKGROUND

- In 1989, the UN General Assembly through a resolution had designated the second Wednesday of October as International Day for Natural Disaster Reduction.
- Later on December 21, 2009, the Assembly adopted a new resolution on in which it designated 13 October as the date to commemorate the Day and it also changed the day's name to International Day for Disaster Reduction.
- The main objective of the observance is to raise awareness of how people are taking action to reduce their risk to disasters.

SENDAI FRAMEWORK

- The "Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030" was adopted during the Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction held in Sendai, Japan in March, 2015.
- It is the first major agreement of the post-2015 development agenda, with seven targets and four priorities for action.
- It was endorsed by the UN General Assembly following the 2015 Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (WCDRR)
- The Framework is for 15-year.
- It is a voluntary and non-binding agreement which recognizes that the State has the primary role to reduce disaster risk but that responsibility should be shared with other stakeholders including local government, the private sector and other stakeholders.
- The new Framework is the successor instrument to the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA) 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters.
- The implementation of the Sendai Framework involves adopting integrated and inclusive institutional measures so as to work towards preventing vulnerability to disaster, increase preparedness for response and recovery and strengthen resilience.

ALTERNATIVE NOBLE LITERATURE PRIZE

Guadeloupean author Maryse Conde has won the New Academy Prize in Literature, an alternative award formed in protest to Nobel Literature Prize.

- New Academy Prize in Literature was formed by New Academy consisting of more than 100 Swedish writers, artists and journalists in protest to denounce what its founders called bias, arrogance and sexism of Swedish Academy, which selects Nobel laureates.
- The New Academy Prize is accompanied by one million kronor, or around \$112,000.

INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION 4.0

The fourth Industrial Revolution describes the present technological age ongoing in 21st century that has come up since the first such revolution took place in 18th century. India's Prime Minister has launched the Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, an initiative of the World Economic Forum. The fourth Industrial Revolution describes the huge changes brought about by smart technologies.

INDIA AND FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

- India has become the fourth country in the world where World Economic Forum has opened its centre for Fourth Industrial Revolution. India is thus, preparing for a massive digital and technological transformation.
- The centre for Fourth Industrial Revolution works as a network that includes USA, China and Japan. It will work in collaboration with NITI Aayog in India to codesign new policies and protocols for emerging technologies.
- Initial focus of India will be on Artificial Intelligence, Blockchain and drones.
- Schemes like Skill India, Start-up India, Atal Innovation Mission and Digital India are developing youths to use new technologies. India's diversity, demographic potential, fast growing market size and digital infrastructure have the potential to make India a global hub for Research and Development.
- Industrial Revolution 4.0 can help in transforming India by:
 1. Alleviating poverty
 2. Better and low-cost healthcare
 3. Enhancing farmer's income
 4. Providing new technology and equipment to farmers
 5. Strengthening infrastructure, improving connectivity
 6. Improve ease of living and ease of doing business

HIGHLIGHTS

- The policy is in sync with the challenges and opportunities for India with the fourth industrial revolution technologies and will place the country firmly in the global supply and value chains.
- Fourth Industrial revolution is driven by ***digital technology***.
- The WEF is setting up a ***Centre for the Fourth Industrial Revolution in Maharashtra***.
- The other centres are in San Francisco, USA, Japan and China.
- ***Artificial intelligence, block chain and drones*** are the first three projects of the centre in India.
- WEF will work in collaboration with the NITI Aayog, business leaders, academia and start-ups in these projects.