

**CURRENT AFFAIRS**  
**15<sup>TH</sup> TO 21<sup>ST</sup> OCTOBER 2018**

**CARNOT PRIZE**

***Recognising the transformations in India's energy sector the Kleinman Centre for Energy Policy at the University of Pennsylvania School of Design is awarding its fourth annual Carnot Prize to Piyush Goyal, Minister of Railways & Coal and former Minister of Power, Coal, New & Renewable Energy and Mines, Government of India.***

**BACKGROUND**

The Carnot Prize is the Kleinman Center's annual recognition of distinguished contributions to energy policy through scholarship or practice. The most prestigious award in the energy sector, Carnot Prize is named after French physicist Nicolas Sadi Carnot who recognised that the power of the steam engine would "produce a great revolution" in human development. The Carnot Prize is intended to honour those leading revolutions in energy policy to further progress and prosperity.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- The Carnot Prize is intended to honour those leading revolutions in energy policy to further progress and prosperity.
- The ministry is being recognised for directing a fast-track effort to electrify 18,000 villages in remote parts of India, helping bridge the country's vast energy divide.
- The Carnot Prize is named in memory of French scientist Sadi Carnot, who in 1824 published Reflections on the Motive Power of Fire, which is recognised as the first statement of what, is now known as the second law of thermodynamics.

**EXERCISE DHARMA GUARDIAN 2018**

***To promote Military cooperation, India and Japan are all set to hold the first ever joint military exercise 'DHARMA GUARDIAN-2018' involving the Indian Army and Japan Ground Self Defence Force at Counter Insurgency Warfare School, Vairengte, India from 01 November to 14 November 2018.***

- Exercise 'DHARMA GUARDIAN-2018' will be yet another step, in deepening strategic ties including closer defence cooperation between the two countries.
- It will contribute immensely in developing mutual understanding and respect for each other's militaries and also facilitate tracking the worldwide phenomenon of terrorism.

**ONEER TM**

***Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Indian Institute of Toxicology Research (CSIR-IITR), Lucknow has developed an innovative technology for "Drinking Water Disinfection System" with Trade name "OneerTM" which was transferred to M/s Bluebird Water Purifiers, New Delhi.***

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- It is useful for continuous treatment of water and eliminates all disease causing pathogens such as virus, bacteria, fungi, protozoa and cyst to provide safe drinking water to domestic and communities settings as per National and International standards prescribed for potable water (BIS, WHO etc.).

- Oneer developed by CSIR-IITR ,will provide access to safe and clean drinking water at a cost of just 2 Paise / Ltr.
- Community level model is of 450 LPH capacity which can be scaled up to 5000 to 1 lakh L/day; and is also maintenance and membrane free.
- The technology will be helpful especially for rural people since it can be solar powered and this development is in line with the 'Make in India' Mission".
- The smaller unit of Oneer is particularly suitable for homes, street food vendors, and small establishments.

### **GUIDELINES & MODEL CONCESSIONAIRE AGREEMENT**

***NITI Aayog launched the Guidelines and Model Concessionaire Agreement, MCA for Public Private Partnership, PPP for Non-Communicable Diseases.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

The documents have been designed to supplement efforts for provision of prevention and treatment services of non-communicable diseases related to Cardiac Sciences, Oncology, and Pulmonary Sciences at the district hospitals especially in tier 2 & 3 cities.

The documents have been developed by NITI Aayog in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, State Governments and representatives from the healthcare industry.

- PPP Units to be established in District Hospitals
- Model covers prevention and treatment of 3 Non-Communicable Diseases viz. Cardio Vascular diseases, Cancers and Pulmonary diseases.

#### **Scope of services:**

1. **Oncology:** Palliative care, Medicinal /Conservative Management (including Chemotherapy, Growth Inhibitors & Hormone Therapy).
  2. **Pulmonology:** Emergency Management of acute syndromes, Medicinal/Conservative Management for COPD, Bronchial Asthma and Bronchoscopy.
  3. **Cardiology:** Emergency Management of acute syndromes, Medicinal/Conservative Management and Angiography/Angioplasty.
- All these services in PPP facility to be offered by a Single partner or a single consortium of private partners.
  - Private partner to invest in upgrading/building and equipping the facility and responsible for operational management and service delivery.
  - Government to provide physical space & other infrastructure in 'as-is where-is' condition, provide support facilities and hospital amenities.
  - User Fee to be fixed as the package rates discovered periodically through States/ Centre Insurance Scheme(s). States which do not have such insurance packages, could use CGHS package rates for period when such insurance rates are not available.
  - Viability Gap Funding (VGF) to be provided by the government(s) should be used as the parameter for bidding in the project.

**WORLD FOOD DAY**

***World Food Day is a day of action dedicated to tackling global hunger. The theme of World Food Day 2018 is ‘Our actions are our future – A zero hunger world by 2030 is possible’.***

The Government of India aims to transform India’s agricultural sector to contribute to the achievements of global environmental objectives, and has launched a new project in association with FAO, India office known as ***‘Green-agriculture: transforming Indian agriculture for global environmental benefits and the conservation of critical biodiversity and forest landscapes’***.

- World Food Day is celebrated every year around the world on 16 October in honour of the date of the founding of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in 1945.
- The day is celebrated widely by many other organizations concerned with food security, including the World Food Programme and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

**PROJECT ARYA**

To attract the youth of the country towards agriculture, a project called ***‘Arya’*** is being run through Krishi Vigyan Kendras and the Farmer Fest program is also playing a leading role in this direction.

***“Attracting and retaining youth in Agriculture (ARYA)”***, a project sanctioned by the Indian Council of Agriculture (ICAR) is being implemented at Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK).

The main objective of the project was to provide complete knowledge and skill on processing, value addition and marketing of coconut and banana products through capacity building programmes involving research and development organizations

**BHARAT NET PROJECT**

***BBNL has played a key role in leading the successful implementation of the Bharat Net project for digitally connecting all 2,50,000 Gram Panchayats (GPs) in the country.***

The objective is to facilitate the delivery of e-governance, e-health, e-education, e-banking and other services to citizens in every part of our country, on a non-discriminatory basis.

**BHARAT NET**

- The target of completing 1,00,000 GPs under phase-I of BharatNet was achieved in December 2017.
- Bharat Net Phase-II is planned to connect the remaining 1,50,000 GPs, using an optimal mix of media, by 31 Mar, 2019.
- Phase II is being implemented through three models – ***state-led model, CPSU model, and private sector model.***
- Further, provision has been made for Last Mile Connectivity in all 2,50,000 GPs through viability gap funding.
- Every GP shall have on an average five WiFi Access Points (APs), including 3 APs (on average) for public institutions such as educational centres, health centres, post offices, police stations, etc
- Bharat Net is being utilized by BSNL, CSC SPV, TSPs and ISPs for delivery of services at Gram Panchayats.
- BSNL has provisioned WiFi hotspots at 1,742 GPs and FTTH connections at 13,513 GPs in various states.

- As part of project implementation, **BBNL** has provided for provisioning of an FTTH connection by BSNL at every GP of Phase I, for a period of one year, to provide an experience of broadband services to the people at the GP level.

### **EARLY WARNING SYSTEM**

***Air Quality Early Warning System for Delhi was launched in Delhi by the Union Minister for Earth Sciences and Environment, Dr. Harsh Vardhan .***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The System is designed to predict extreme air pollution events and give alerts to take necessary steps as per Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) of the Government of India.
- The air pollution system has been developed jointly by the scientists at Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune, India Meteorological Department and National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF).
- **The warning system consists of**
  - a) Real time observations of air quality over Delhi region and details about natural aerosols like dust (from dust storms) and particulate matter using different satellite data sets.
  - b) Predictions of air pollutants from two different air quality prediction systems based on state-of-the-art atmospheric chemistry transport models.
  - c) Warning Messages and Alerts and Bulletins.
    - The prediction systems were developed by scientists of MoES institutions with the technical support from the National Centre for Atmospheric Research (NCAR), USA and the Finnish Meteorological Institute (FMI).
    - The modelling framework typically consists of a high-resolution weather prediction model with an atmospheric chemistry transport model.
    - Both the models have data assimilation facility, which can assimilate data from satellites on dust aerosols, particulate matter from stubble burning and other air pollutants like SO<sub>2</sub> and NO<sub>2</sub>.
    - The models will consider the background aerosols and pollutants, long range transport of dust from dust storms and particulate matter from stubble burning. The predictions are now available up to 72 hours lead time.
    - Union Minister also released a mega emission inventory of Delhi which was made by scientists at IITM Pune who carried out a mega emission inventory campaign involving around 140 students mapping all possible local sources of air pollution with around 37,500 hours of work.
    - The final product with 400 m x 400m high-resolution emission inventory of Delhi and fringe area of all eight important air pollutants (like PM<sub>2.5</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub>, NO<sub>x</sub>, CO, SO<sub>2</sub>, BC, OC and VOCs) was released.

### **JUSTICE VERMA PANEL REPORT**

***The Centre recently announced its plan to set up a panel of judges to look into the legal and institutional framework to curb sexual harassment at workplaces following the #MeToo campaign on social media.S***

At that time of the submission of the report, the Sexual Harassment at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Bill had already been passed by the Lok Sabha and was awaiting the Rajya Sabha's nod. The Bill was passed unchanged by the Upper House a month later.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- However, as early as 2013, the Justice J.S. Verma Committee, in its landmark report on gender laws, had recommended setting up of an **employment tribunal instead of an internal-complaints committee (ICC)** in sweeping changes to the Sexual Harassment at the Workplace Bill.
- The panel was formed in the aftermath of the December 16 Nirbhaya gangrape in 2012 and the ensuing nationwide protests, and submitted its report on January 23, 2013.
- The report noted that an internal complaints committee as laid down under the then proposed law would be “counter-productive” as dealing with such complaints in-house could discourage women from filing complaints. Instead, the committee proposed forming an employment tribunal to receive and adjudicate all complaints.
- To ensure speedy disposal of complaints, the Justice Verma Committee proposed that the tribunal should not function as a civil court but may choose its own procedure to deal with each complaint.
- The Committee said any “unwelcome behaviour” should be seen from the subjective perception of the complainant, thus broadening the scope of the definition of sexual harassment.
- An employer could be held liable if he or she facilitated sexual harassment, permitted an environment where sexual misconduct becomes widespread and systemic, where the employer fails to disclose the company’s policy on sexual harassment and ways in which workers can file a complaint as well as fails to forward a complaint to the tribunal. The company would also be liable to pay compensation to the complainant
- The panel also made several suggestions to encourage women to come forward and file complaints. For instance, it opposed penalising women for false complaints and called it an “abusive provision intended to nullify the objective of the law”.
- The Verma panel also said that the time-limit of three months to file a complaint should be done away with and a complainant should not be transferred without her consent.

**Vishakha guidelines**

- In 1997 Supreme Court delivered the verdict laying down legally binding obligations on institutions regarding prohibition, prevention and redressal of sexual harassment at workplace.
- These guidelines, the foundation for the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013, came into force in connection with a PIL in the alleged gangrape of Bhanwari Devi, a social worker from Rajasthan.
- In 1992, she had prevented the marriage of a one-year-old girl, leading to her rape as an act of revenge.
- These guidelines were recommended for somebody who was harassed in the present. It had not considered incidents of sexual harassment that took place in the past — like those that have now been reported.

**FUTURE POLICY AWARD 2018**

***The world’s best laws and policies promoting agroecology are awarded the Future Policy Award (FPA) 2018. The “100% organic state” Sikkim, in India, is this year’s winner of the “Oscar for best policies”, beating 51 nominated policies from 25 countries.***

Policies from Brazil, Denmark and Quito (Ecuador) take home Silver Awards.

## **HIGHLIGHTS**

- This year's award is co-organised by the ***Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Future Council (WFC) and IFOAM – Organics International.***
- Gold Prize winner Sikkim is the first organic state in the world. All of its farmland is certified organic. Embedded in its design are socioeconomic aspects such as consumption and market expansion, cultural aspects as well as health, education, rural development and sustainable tourism.
- The Vision Award goes to ***TEEBAgriFood, an initiative of "The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity"*** (TEEB) by UN Environment.
- TEEBAgriFood has developed a comprehensive evaluation framework for food systems that helps decision-makers to compare different policies and the market to value food more accurately.

## **TEEB**

**The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB)** is a global initiative focused on "making nature's values visible". Its principal objective is to mainstream the values of biodiversity and ecosystem services into decision-making at all levels. It aims to achieve this goal by following a structured approach to valuation that helps decision-makers recognize the wide range of benefits provided by ecosystems and biodiversity, demonstrate their values in economic terms and, where appropriate, suggest how to capture those values in decision-making.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Future Policy Award is the only award which honours policies on an international level. Each year, the World Future Council chooses a topic for the Future Policy Award on which policy progress is particularly urgent. In partnership with FAO and IFOAM – Organics International, the 2018 Future Policy Award will highlight policies that scale up agroecology to contribute to the protection of life and livelihoods of small-scale food producers, ensure sustainable food production systems and implement climate resilient agricultural practices.

## **FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANISATION (FAO)**

- It is a specialized agency of the United Nations, serving both developed and developing countries that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.
- It was formed on 16 October 1945 in Quebec, Canada and has its headquarters in Rome, Italy.
- It helps developing countries to modernize and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices, ensuring good nutrition and food security.

## **ORGANIC FARMING**

Organic farming uses naturally occurring substances for farming while prohibiting the use of synthetic substances which enhances agro-ecosystem health (biodiversity, biological cycles and soil biological activity).

- Organic farming movement was started in 1940s as a reaction to use of synthetic substances in agriculture. The term 'organic farming' was coined by Lord Northbourne in his book 'Look to the Land'.
- Organic produce contain less or no chemicals and are safest to consume.

- It relies on organic or natural fertilisers. Examples – Compost manure, Green manure, Bone meal.
- It places emphasis on techniques like Crop rotation (practise of growing a series of different types of crops in the same area in subsequent seasons) and Companion planting (planting of different crops in proximity).
- Biological pest control mixed cropping and nurturing insect predators are encouraged.
- Organic farming protects long term fertility of soil, provides crop nutrients by soil micro-organisms, Nitrogen self-sufficiency through the use of legumes and biological Nitrogen fixation, disease and pest control, livestock management and protects overall environment.
- It prevents the use of modern agricultural methods that are harmful for human health.

### **BepiCOLOMBO**

***The European-Japanese BepiColombo spacecraft have successfully launched toward Mercury.***

BepiColombo, a European-Japanese project that will be just the third mission to study the solar system's innermost planet, launched from Kourou, French Guiana, aboard an Ariane 5 ECA rocket.

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- BepiColombo is a planned European-Japanese mission to Mercury.
- The mission includes a carrier spacecraft called the **Mercury Transfer Module (MTM)** – which supplies electrical power during interplanetary cruise – and two separate orbiters.
- The spacecraft will take about seven years to get to Mercury, using several gravity assists from other planets along the way.
- It will fly by Earth and Venus in 2020, Venus in 2021 and Mercury itself between 2021 and 2025. These flybys will slow down the spacecraft enough to be captured by Mercury's gravity in December 2025.

#### **BepiColombo science**

ESA noted that going to Mercury would help scientists not only understand how the planet had formed, but also give more information generally about the solar system's formation.

Objectives (in ESA's words) include:

- Investigate the origin and evolution of a planet close to the parent star
- Study Mercury as a planet: its form, interior structure, geology, composition and craters
- Examine Mercury's vestigial atmosphere (exosphere): its composition and dynamics
- Probe Mercury's magnetized envelope (magnetosphere): its structure and dynamics
- Determine the origin of Mercury's magnetic field
- Investigate polar deposits: their composition and origin
- Perform a test of Einstein's theory of general relativity

### **MOUNT ETNA**

***The southeast flank of Mount Etna in Sicily is sliding towards the sea at a rate of several centimetres a year.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- It's likely caused by gravity pulling on Etna's lower underwater slopes, far from the summit.

- The kind of stress that this movement creates inside volcanoes can cause devastating landslides.
- This means Etna is more susceptible to catastrophic collapse than had previously been realised.

### **Mt. ETNA**

- Mount Etna is the largest active volcano in Europe and one of the world's most frequently erupting volcanoes. It is also the volcano with the longest record of continuous eruption.
- Located near the east coast of the island of Sicily in Italy, Mount Etna is 10,900 feet (3,329 meters) tall with a base circumference of about 93 miles (150 kilometers).
- The mountain's largest feature is the Valle del Bove (Valley of the Ox), a large horseshoe-shaped caldera on the eastern slope.
- Etna sits on the active fault between the African plate and the Ionian microplate, which are both being subducted together beneath the Eurasian plate.
- In June 2013, it was added to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
- Due to its history of recent activity and nearby population, Mount Etna has been designated a Decade Volcano by the United Nations.

### **EINSTEIN PRIZE**

***Indian American Professor Abhay Ashtekar has been conferred with prestigious Einstein Prize for numerous and seminal contributions to general relativity, including the theory of black holes, canonical quantum gravity, and quantum cosmology.***

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The Einstein Prize is a biennial prize awarded by the American Physical Society.
- The recipients are chosen for their outstanding accomplishments in the field of gravitational physics.
- The prize carries an award of \$10,000.
- The prize is special because it is the highest honour bestowed by APS in the broad area of gravitational science.
- The first Einstein prize was awarded jointly to Peter Bergmann and John Wheeler, who introduced general relativity to American universities by creating research groups.

### **INDIAN STRATEGIC PETROLEUM RESERVES LTD**

***India hopes to forge partnerships with private players to build out its strategic petroleum reserves within the coming year.***

India's government approved two strategic petroleum reserve (SPR) sites with a total capacity of 6.5 million tonnes.

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- To ensure energy security, the Government of India had decided to set up 5 million metric tons (MMT) of strategic crude oil storages at three locations namely, Visakhapatnam, Mangalore and Padur (near Udupi).
- These strategic storages would be in addition to the existing storages of crude oil and petroleum products with the oil companies and would serve as a cushion during any external supply disruptions.
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- The construction of the Strategic Crude Oil Storage facilities is being managed by Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL), a Special Purpose Vehicle, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB) under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas. Engineers India Limited (EIL) is taken as the Project Management Consultant for all three projects.
- The crude oil storages are constructed in underground rock caverns and are located on the East and West coast of India. Crude oil from these caverns can be supplied to the Indian Refineries either through pipelines or through a combination of pipelines and ships. Underground rock caverns are considered the safest means of storing hydrocarbons.

#### **YOUTH ROAD SAFETY LEARNERS LICENCE PROGRAMME**

***The government has launched the Youth Road Safety Learners Licence programme.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- It is a PPP initiative to be run in collaboration with Diageo India and the Institute of Road Traffic Education (IRTE).
- It attempts to bring a formal and structured training program for the young, first-time drivers as they apply for learner's license.
- It covers varied aspects of responsible driving including defensive driving, ill effects of driving under the influence of alcohol, speeding and wearing of helmets spread over two days.
- In the first year, the programme will cover 20 universities with a total of 400 programmes across the country.
- The programme is a part of the Union Government's efforts to emphasise on the importance of road safety, as recent times have seen an alarming rise in road fatalities especially among the youth.
- The programme will help the government achieve its target of reducing road accidents by 50 percent by 2020.
- It will help improve road safety awareness amongst the young adults by inculcating behavioural change and creating awareness about responsible driving habits.

#### **AWARSD SCHEME UNDER SAUBHAGYA**

***Ministry of Power and New & Renewable Energy has announced an award scheme under Saubhagya to felicitate the DISCOMs / Power Department of the States and their employees for achieving 100% household electrification in their area of operations. It includes cash prize and certificate of appreciation.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Awards would be provided for achieving 100% household electrification at DISCOM/Power Department level of the States.
- Eight States which have already achieved more than 99% household electrification prior to launch of Saubhagya (Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Goa, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Punjab and Tamil Nadu), are ineligible for participation under the award scheme. All the remaining States and their Discoms are eligible for the award.
- Award will be given in three categories:
  - a) DISCOMs / Power Departments of Special Category States (which includes seven North Eastern States, Sikkim, J&K and Uttarakhand).

- b) DISCOMs / Power Departments of other than Special Category States (which includes Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Rajasthan, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal) having more than 5 Lakh un-electrified households.
- c) DISCOMs / Power Departments of other than Special Category States having less than 5 Lakh un-electrified households.

### **SAUBHAGYA SCHEME**

- Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana – ‘Saubhagya’ was launched in September, 2017.
- Under Saubhagya free electricity connections to all households (both APL and poor families) in rural areas and poor families in urban areas will be provided.
- Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) has been designated as nodal agency for the Saubhagya scheme.
- The scheme aims to achieve universal household electrification in all parts of the country at a cost of Rs 16,320 crore, including Gross Budgetary Support of Rs 12,320 crore from the government.
- All DISCOMs including Private Sector DISCOMs, State Power Departments and RE Cooperative Societies shall be eligible for financial assistance under the scheme in line with DDUGJY.
- The prospective beneficiary households for free electricity connections under the scheme would be identified using SECC 2011 data.
- However, un-electrified households not covered under SECC data would also be provided electricity connections under the scheme on payment of Rs. 500 which shall be recovered by DISCOMs in 10 instalments through electricity bill.

### **IMF QUOTA REFORM**

***Stressing on the need to strengthen institutions like IMF to tackle financial crisis, India called for quota reforms so that share of emerging nations increases in line with their growing economic position.***

India also pointed out that **protectionism, trade tensions and tightening of financial conditions** are challenges for the world.

### **REFORMING IMF**

A suitable approach could be the association of the IMF (International Monetary Fund), being at the centre of the GFSN (global financial safety net), at an earlier stage rather than when crisis has already occurred. Hence, the strengthening of this Multilateral Institution is crucial.

Speaking at 15th General Review of Quotas in Bali, Indonesia, INDIA said this agenda of IMF is urgent as there is a deadline fixed for its conclusion next year.

Both, enhancement in the Quantum of Quota Resources and Realignment of Voting Shares should take place so that Quota Shares of EMDCs (Emerging Market and Developing Countries) increase in line with its growing relative economic position in the world.

INDIA also participated in the 98th meeting of the Development Committee Plenary. He mentioned that India had supported the capital increase of the World Bank Group with the expectation that it will deliver on its core development responsibilities articulated in the Forward Look.

The additional capital would be put to work expeditiously and leveraged to enhance International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) lending volumes and International Finance Corporation (IFC) investments.

### **IMF QUOTA**

- The IMF is a quota-based institution.
- Quotas are the building blocks of the IMF's financial and governance structure.
- An individual member country's quota broadly reflects its relative position in the world economy. Quotas are denominated in Special Drawing Rights (SDRs), the IMF's unit of account.

### **ROLES OF QUOTA**

- **Resource Contributions**: Quotas determine the maximum amount of financial resources a member is obliged to provide to the IMF.
- **Voting Power**: Quotas are a key determinant of the voting power in IMF decisions. Votes comprise one vote per SDR100,000 of quota plus basic votes (same for all members).
- **Access to Financing**: The maximum amount of financing a member can obtain from the IMF under normal access is based on its quota.
- **SDR Allocations**: Quotas determine a member's share in a general allocation of SDRs.

### **6<sup>TH</sup> INTERREGIONAL MINISTERIAL MEET OF RCEP**

***The 6th Interregional Ministerial Meeting of Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) was held recently in Singapore.***

India has been constructively engaged in RCEP negotiations with an aim to work towards a high quality, balanced and inclusive outcomes that take into consideration sensitivities and interests of member countries.

### **RCEP**

- The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) is a so-called mega-regional economic agreement being negotiated since 2012 between the 10 ASEAN (Association of South-East Asian Nations) governments and their six FTA partners: Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea.
- RCEP is largely driven by ASEAN. Indeed, the project originated in, and expands upon, the stitching together of five existing ASEAN+1 trade agreements, that ASEAN signed with Japan, South Korea, China, India, Australia and New Zealand.
- Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) aims to cover goods, services, investments, economic and technical cooperation, competition and intellectual property rights.

### **CM's URBAN LEADERS FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME**

***Delhi government has launched Chief Minister's Urban Leaders Fellowship Programme that seeks to attract young leaders across the country to work with it on addressing some of the most pressing urban challenges.***

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- It aims to provide unique opportunity to young leaders across India to work within the Delhi government to address some of the most pressing urban challenges in India.

- It also seeks to attract youth who are passionate about public service and are willing to work for two years.
- Fellows selected under this programme will be assigned to work with ministers or senior officials across various departments Delhi government such as health, education, water, transport, art and culture.
- They will be paid remuneration of Rs 1.25 lakh per month and Rs 75,000 per month to Associate Fellows.

### LHOTSHAMPA

***Bhutan is holding elections this week. But the Lhotshampa people, brutally driven out of the small kingdom in the 1990s, won't be voting.***

***Bhutan still describes the Lhotshampa as immigrants, justifying its nationalistic laws as essential for cultural identity and political stability.***

### HIGHLIGHTS

- They are a heterogeneous Bhutanese people of Nepalese descent.
- The Lhotshampa people are native to southern Bhutan.
- The Nepali-speaking Lhotshampa were branded as immigrants and stripped of citizenship rights when the then-king introduced a "One Nation, One People" policy in 1985.
- The edict made following the customs of the Buddhist majority mandatory, including wearing their traditional dress, and speaking Nepali was banned.

### POCSO ACT

***Survivors of child sexual abuse can file a police complaint after they become adults. The government clarified that there is no time bar on reporting such crimes.***

The Law Ministry concurred with the opinion of the Ministry of Women and Child Development that unlike the Code of Criminal Proceedings (CrPC), the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO), 2012, does not lay down a time limit for reporting crimes covered under it. "The Ministry of Law, after examining the provisions of POCSO Act vis-à-vis provisions of CrPC, has advised that there appears no period of limitation mentioned in Section 19 in regard to reporting of the offences under the POCSO Act, 2012.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- **Section 19 of the POCSO Act**, which deals with sexual crimes against children, lays down the procedure for reporting a crime but doesn't specify a time limit or statute of limitation for reporting it.
- Whereas the CrPC lays down different time-limits for crimes which carry a punishment of up to three years, there is no time bar for crimes that would attract a jail term of more than three years.
- This is an important step for survivors of child abuse, who may try to file a complaint as adults but are turned away at police stations.

### POCSO ACT

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act) 2012 was created in order to effectively address sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children.

- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 obtained the President's assent on 19th June 2012.
- It was notified in the Gazette of India as on 20th June, 2012.
- The Act defines a child as any person below 18 years of age.
- It defines different forms of sexual abuse, including penetrative and non-penetrative assault, as well as sexual harassment and use of child pornography.
- It deems a sexual assault to be "aggravated" under certain circumstances, such as when the abused child is mentally ill/unwell.
- It is also aggravated when the abuse is committed by a person in a position of trust or authority like a family member, police officer, teacher, or doctor.
- The Act also assigns the police in the role of child protectors during the investigative process.

### **SWASTH BHARAT YATRA**

***The government launched a national campaign 'Swasth Bharat Yatra' on the World Food Day under which a pan-India cycle rally is being organised to sensitise people about eating safe food and being healthy.***

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is leading this campaign where about 7,500 cyclists are expected to participate in over 18,000-kilometre relay cycle rally travelling across six tracks through almost every state and Union Territory over 100 days to propagate a powerful message 'Eat Right India'.

- The campaign has been launched by the central government, in association with states, from 16 October on occasion of the World Food Day.
- The FSSAI is leading this campaign to create consumer awareness about eating safe and nutritious food for becoming healthy.
- The 'Swasth Bharat Yatra' was launched simultaneously at Leh (in Jammu & Kashmir), Panaji (Goa), Thiruvananthapuram (Kerala), Puducherry, Ranchi (Jharkhand) and Agarthala (Tripura).
- From 16 October to 27 January, 2019, on every single day, 150 volunteer cyclists and a convoy including the 'Eat Right Mobile Unit' and 'Mobile Food Testing Unit' would travel across the country to build awareness around food safety, combating food adulteration and healthy diets.

### **PM BHARTIYA JANAUSHADHI PARIYOJANA**

***Central Warehouse of Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana has been set up at Bilaspur, Gurugram. It has been setup by the Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI).***

The hi-tech Central Warehouse would facilitate seamless distribution of Jan Aushadhi generic medicines to all PMBJP Kendra functional across the country.

#### **PMBJP**

- 'Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana' is a campaign launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Govt. Of India, to provide quality medicines at affordable prices to the masses through special kendra's known as Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra.
- Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra (PMBJK) have been set up to provide generic drugs, which are available at lesser prices but are equivalent in quality and efficacy as expensive branded drugs.

- Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI) is the implementing agency of PMBJP. BPPI (Bureau of Pharma Public Sector Undertakings of India) has been established under the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Govt. of India, with the support of all the CPSUs.

*Generic medicines are unbranded medicines which are equally safe and having the same efficacy as that of branded medicines in terms of their therapeutic value. The prices of generic medicines are much cheaper than their branded equivalent.*

#### **ASK DISHA**

***Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) has launched an all new feature on its e-ticketing website Called 'Ask Disha' – Digital Interaction to Seek Help Anytime – the new artificial intelligence-enabled chat bot is a first of its kind initiative for any Indian government website.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- 'Ask Disha' can be used by Indian Railways passengers to get their questions answered through the chat bot.
- The 'Ask Disha' chat bot has been jointly developed by IRCTC and CoRover Private Limited, a Bangalore-based start-up.
- According to IRCTC, some of the salient features of 'Ask Disha' include 24\*7 customer query support, quick response time to queries and multi-tasking. The new next-generation IRCTC e-ticketing website gets an average 4 million users per day.

#### **#Self4Society APP**

***#Self4Society app, developed by MyGov, has been launched by the government to help coordinate volunteer work undertaken by professionals.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- This platform will help to create better synergies among so many CSR and other initiatives and lead to a much better outcome of the efforts of professionals.
- Companies have observed that a spirit of service and volunteering improves employee satisfaction and reduces employee attrition.
- The app will have incentives, gamification and intra- and inter-company competitions, and social networking.
- The volunteer time for the government's flagship programmes such as Swachh Bharat is expected to increase.

#### **1<sup>ST</sup> SMOKE FREE STATE IN INDIA**

***Villages getting symbolic smoke-free certificates have been making headlines in the country for some time now. But Kerala is now set to become the first smoke-free State in the country with public sector oil companies eyeing 100% LPG penetration here.***

#### **PM UJJWALA YOJANA**

- Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana aims to provide LPG (liquefied petroleum gas) connections to poor households.

- Under the scheme, an adult woman member of a below poverty line family identified through the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) is given a deposit-free LPG connection with financial assistance of Rs 1,600 per connection by the Centre.
- Eligible households will be identified in consultation with state governments and Union territories. The scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Empowering women and protecting their health.
- Reducing the serious health hazards associated with cooking based on fossil fuel.
- Reducing the number of deaths in India due to unclean cooking fuel.
- Preventing young children from significant number of acute respiratory illnesses caused due to indoor air pollution by burning the fossil fuel.

### **GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS REPORT 2018**

***The Global Competitiveness Index assesses the competitiveness landscape of 144 economies, providing insight into the drivers of their productivity and prosperity.***

**The World Economic Forum (WEF) has released the Global Competitiveness Report 2018.**

Competitiveness is defined as the set of institutions, policies and factors that determine the level of productivity of a country.

**The different aspects of competitiveness are captured in 12 pillars, which compose the Global Competitiveness Index.**

- |                                  |                                 |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Infrastructure                | 7. Labour market efficiency     |
| 2. Macroeconomic                 | 8. Financial market development |
| 3. Environment                   | 9. Technological readiness      |
| 4. Health and primary education  | 10. market size                 |
| 5. Higher education and training | 11. Business sophistication     |
| 6. Goods market efficiency       | 12. Innovation                  |

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- India was ranked as the 58th most competitive economy with a score of 62.0 on the Global Competitiveness Index 2018.
- India jumped five spots from 2017, the largest gain among G20 economies.
- India ranked highest among South Asian countries. Sri Lanka was ranked 86th, Bangladesh 103rd, Pakistan 107th and Nepal 109th.
- As per the report, India leads the region in all other areas of competitiveness except for health, education and skills.
- As per the report, India's greatest competitive advantages include its market size and innovation.

### **GLOBALLY**

- On the list of 140 economies, the United States topped the list with a score of 85.6, followed by Singapore and Germany at the second and the third positions respectively.

- Other countries in the top 10 include Switzerland (4th), Japan (5th), Netherlands (6th), Hong Kong (7th), United Kingdom (8th), Sweden (9th) and Denmark (10th).
- In Europe, Sweden is ranked the highest among the Nordic economies at 9th position, while France (17th) is among the top 20. Countries such as Germany and Switzerland set the global standards for innovation.
- Competitiveness performance in the Middle East and North Africa remains diverse, with Israel (20th) and the United Arab Emirates (27th), leading the way in their respective regions.
- 17 of the 34 sub-Saharan African economies are among the bottom 20. Mauritius (49th) leads the region, ahead of South Africa and nearly 91 places ahead of Chad (140th).
- Among the BRICS economies, China topped the list at 28th place with a score of 72.6, followed by Russia, India, South Africa and Brazil respectively.

### **12<sup>TH</sup> ASEM SUMMIT**

***The 12th ASEM Summit (ASEM12) was successfully held on 18-19 October 2018 in Brussels,***

The ASEM summit brought together:

- heads of state or government of 51 European and Asian countries.
- representatives of the European Union.
- the Secretary General of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

**Discussions focused on the theme "Europe and Asia: Global Partners for Global Challenges".**

Leaders sought to strengthen dialogue and cooperation between the two continents on a wide range of areas, including:

- trade & investment
- connectivity
- sustainable development and climate
- security challenges such as terrorism, non-proliferation, cyber-security, irregular migration.

### **75<sup>TH</sup> YEAR OF AZAD HIND GOVERNMENT**

***Commemoration of '75th Year of Establishment of Azad Hind Government' at Red Fort, Delhi.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The Azad Hind Government, founded on 21st October, 1943 was inspired by Neta ji Subhash Chandra Bose who was the leader of Azad Hind Government and also the Head of State of this Provisional Indian Government-in-exile.
- It was a part of the freedom movement, originating in 1940s outside India with a purpose of allying with Axis powers to free India from British rule.
- The existence of the Azad Hind Government gave a greater legitimacy to the independence struggle against the British.
- Pertinently, the role of Azad Hind Fauj or the Indian National Army (INA) had been crucial in bequeathing a much needed impetus to India's struggle for Independence.

#### **BACKGROUND**

- INA was an armed force formed by Indian nationalists in 1942 in Southeast Asia during World War II.

- Its aim was to secure Indian independence from British rule.
- It formed an alliance with Imperial Japan in the latter's campaign in the Southeast Asian theatre of WWII.
- The army was first formed in 1942 under Mohan Singh, by Indian PoWs of the British-Indian Army captured by Japan in the Malayan campaign and at Singapore.
- This first INA collapsed and was disbanded in December that year after differences between the INA leadership and the Japanese military over its role in Japan's war in Asia.
- It was revived under the leadership of Subhash Chandra Bose after his arrival in Southeast Asia in 1943.
- The army was declared to be the army of Bose's Arzi Hukumat-e-Azad Hind (the Provisional Government of Free India).
- Under Bose's leadership, the INA drew ex-prisoners and thousands of civilian volunteers from the Indian expatriate population in Malaya (present-day Malaysia) and Burma.
- This second INA fought along with the Imperial Japanese Army against the British and Commonwealth forces in the campaigns in Burma, in Imphal and at Kohima, and later against the successful Burma Campaign of the Allies.

#### **15<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER AS MAHILA KISAN DIWAS**

- The government has allocated more than 30% funds for women under various major schemes, programs and development related activities in order to bring women in the agriculture mainstream.
- About 18% of the agricultural households in India are led by women. In addition to agriculture, women have been making exceptional contribution in horticulture, fisheries, animal husbandry, beekeeping etc. – the participation of women is 75% in the production of major crops, 79% in horticulture, 51% in post-harvest work and 95% in animal husbandry and fisheries.
- A **National Gender Resource Centre in Agriculture**, set up in the Department of Agriculture Cooperation & Farmers Welfare, has developed a women sensitization module to bring about change in the mindset and behaviour of male program operators.
- Special importance is being given to the role of women in achieving the goal of doubling farmers' income by 2022.
- Government's revised **ATMA scheme** is providing support to the Food Security Groups of the farmers to ensure food security at the domestic and community levels.
- Under this, the Women's Food Security Groups are being given financial assistance at the rate of 2 groups / per block and at the rate of Rs 10,000 per group / per year.

#### **MAN BOOKER PRIZE**

***Northern Irish writer- Anna Burns has won the 2018 Man Booker Prize for her third full-length novel- "Milkman".***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The leading literary award in English, The Man Booker Prize was launched in 1969.
- It aims to promote the 'finest in fiction' and is awarded each year to the book adjudged as the best novel of the year written in English and published in the United Kingdom.
- The winner of The Man Booker Prize receives £50,000. Sponsored by Man Group, the foundation also awards £2,500 and a designer bound copy of their book to each of the six shortlisted authors.

- The winner and shortlisted authors are also guaranteed a worldwide readership as well as a dramatic spike in book sales.

### **PROGRAMME PRAKRITI**

***Two Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) were signed, by Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE), Dehradun, with Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS) and Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS). ICFRE is an autonomous Council under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.***

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The MoUs have been signed to launch the programme PRAKRITI with the objective to promote awareness about forests and environment, to stimulate interest among the students of NVS and KVS in maintaining a balanced environment and for acquiring skills that reflect care and protection towards forests, environment and society.
- Another objective is to provide a platform to school children to learn practical skills towards judicious use of our resources and to mobilize a cadre of youth for raising a people's movement committed to conservation of forest and environment.
- Through this collaboration, knowledge will be imparted to students/teachers of NVS and KVS on environment, forest, environmental services and contemporary areas of forestry research by way of lectures and interactive sessions by scientists of ICFRE institutes.
- Visits of students/teachers of NVS and KVS schools will also be arranged to the laboratories and field/experiments of ICFRE institutes for hands-on experiences.
- The MoUs, signed for a period of **10 years** are expected to make the youth of the country sensitive about national and global issues of environment and forests and help them to become responsible citizens.

### **BACKGROUND**

**ICFRE**, through its nine Institutes and five Centres located across the country, is guiding, promoting and coordinating forestry research, extension and education at the national level. Currently ICFRE is focusing on contemporary issues of national and international importance particularly in the areas of climate change, forest productivity, biodiversity conservation and skill development.

**Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti** was established with the primary objective to provide modern quality education to talented children, predominantly from the rural areas, without regard to their families socio-economic condition. At present, it has 660 functional residential schools.

**Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan** was established in 1963 to provide uninterrupted education to wards of the transferable Central Government employees. KVS established Kendriya Vidyalayas all over the country to impart quality education, promotion of national integration, adventure activities, physical education etc.

### **CURRENCY MONITORING LIST**

***In its latest report, the US has said that it could remove India from its currency monitoring list of major trading partners citing certain developments and steps taken by New Delhi, which address some of its major concerns.***

India was for the first time placed by the US in its currency monitoring list of countries with potentially questionable foreign exchange policies along with five other countries — China, Germany, Japan, South Korea and Switzerland.

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- India's circumstances have shifted markedly, as the central bank's net sales of foreign exchange over the first six months of 2018 led net purchases over the four quarters through June 2018 to fall to \$4 billion, or 0.2% of GDP.
- This represented a notable change from 2017, when purchases over the first three quarters of the year pushed net purchases of foreign exchange above 2% of GDP.
- Recent sales came amid a turnaround in foreign portfolio inflows, as foreign investors pulled portfolio capital out of India (and many other emerging markets) over the first half of the year.
- The **three pre-conditions for being named currency manipulator** are:
  1. A trade surplus of over \$20 billion with the US.
  2. A current account deficit surplus of 3% of the GDP.
  3. Persistent foreign exchange purchases of 2% plus of the GDP over 12 months.

### **GI TAG FOR BIHAR'S SHAHI LITCHI**

***Bihar's Shahi litchi has got the Geographical Indication (GI) tag and has become an exclusive brand in the national and international market.***

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The famous Shahi litchi, which is famous for its sweet, juicy, unique flavour and aroma, is mostly grown in Muzaffarpur and neighbouring districts including East Champaran, Vaishali, Samastipur and Begusarai.
- The GI registration was done in the name of Litchi Growers Association of Bihar, which had applied for the tag.
- Bihar produces 40% of the litchi grown in the country on 38% of the area. The GI tag to Shahi litchi will boost up its demand in the market and will minimise the fear of fake and poor quality litchis. The GI tag for the fruit will help and benefit thousands of litchi growers who will gain access to more markets and get better price in the country and abroad.
- Other GI tags associated with **Bihar: Katrani rice, Jardalu mango and Magahi paan (betel vine).**

### **GI TAG**

- A GI is primarily an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product (handicrafts and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory.
- Typically, such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is essentially attributable to the place of its origin.
- Once the GI protection is granted, no other producer can misuse the name to market similar products. It also provides comfort to customers about the authenticity of that product.
- GI is covered as element of intellectual property rights (IPRs) under Paris Convention for Protection of Industrial Property.
- At international level, GI is governed by WTO's Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS).
- In India, Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection Act), 1999 governs it.

**6<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF NDMA**

***The Prime Minister recently chaired the sixth meeting of National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) at New Delhi.***

Prime Minister reviewed the activities of NDMA to effectively manage and respond to disasters affecting the country. He also reviewed ongoing projects undertaken by NDMA.

Prime Minister emphasized on the need for better coordination between the various stakeholders and undertake more joint exercises to bring about effective response to save life and property.

**NDMA**

- On 23 December 2005, the Government of India enacted the Disaster Management Act, which envisaged the creation of National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), headed by the Prime Minister, and State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs) headed by respective Chief Ministers, to spearhead and implement a holistic and integrated approach to Disaster Management in India.
- NDMA, as the apex body, is mandated to lay down the policies, plans and guidelines for Disaster Management to ensure timely and effective response to disasters.

**NCR RASTA & YATRI RASTA**

***The North Central Railways (NCR) has launched two mobile apps.***

**NCR RASTA (Railway assets Summerised Tracking Application)**

- It is for use of railway officers and staff and has exact mapping of all railway assets. It will enable railway staff to reach desired asset using Google Navigation in case of any emergency.

**YATRI RASTA (Railway Approach to Station Tracking Application)**

- It will allow general public to locate railway stations easily. It is already available for smartphones running on Android and can be downloaded free of cost from Google Play Store.

**12<sup>th</sup> ASEAN DEFENCE MINISTERS MEETING & 5<sup>TH</sup> ADMM PLUS**

***Singapore hosted the 12th ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) and the 5th ADMM-Plus to be held on October 19 and 20.***

The ADMM and ADMM-Plus serves as key Ministerial-level platforms in the regional security architecture, promoting strategic dialogue and practical cooperation between ASEAN and its partners.

- The 12th ADMM and 5th ADMM-Plus are the pinnacle meetings of Singapore's 2018 ADMM and ADMM-Plus chairmanship.
- This is the second time that Singapore is chairing the ADMM since its establishment in 2006 and the first time to chair the ADMM-Plus since its establishment in 2010.
- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional intergovernmental organisation comprising 10 Southeast Asian countries, which promotes intergovernmental cooperation and facilitates economic, political, security, military, educational, and sociocultural integration.
- Indonesia, Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Vietnam, Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, Brunei and Laos comprise the 10-member ASEAN.

- India is a full dialogue partner of the ASEAN.

### **FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE**

***After an on-site assessment of the steps taken by Pakistan to curb terror financing and money laundering, a visiting Financial Action Task Force (FATF) team has finalised a report with 40 recommendations for de-listing Islamabad from its grey list from September next year.***

The 40 recommendations are segregated in 11 outcomes performance benchmarks. Pakistan is compliant in more than 50% of the recommendations.

Pakistan was placed on the grey list by the FATF in June for failing to curb anti-terror financing. It has been scrambling in recent months to avoid being added to a list of countries deemed non-compliant with anti-money laundering and terrorist financing regulations by the Paris-based FATF, a measure that officials here fear could further hurt its economy.

### **FATF**

- The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 on the initiative of the G7.
- It is a “policy-making body” which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in various areas.
- The FATF Secretariat is housed at the OECD headquarters in Paris.
- The objectives of the FATF are to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures for combating money laundering, terrorist financing and other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
- The FATF monitors the progress of its members in implementing necessary measures, reviews money laundering and terrorist financing techniques and counter-measures, and promotes the adoption and implementation of appropriate measures globally.
- In collaboration with other international stakeholders, the FATF works to identify national-level vulnerabilities with the aim of protecting the international financial system from misuse.

### **INDIA'S 1<sup>ST</sup> ATM KIOSK**

***Amidst uncertainty over the validity of cryptocurrencies and the Central government directions preventing banks from trading the same, Unocoin Technologies Private Ltd has set up India's first ATM kiosk to trade in cryptocurrencies in Bengaluru.***

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The first-of-its-kind automated teller machine will have both a trading and exchange platform, and will allow verified customers to use the device. It is expected to become operational soon.
- This kiosk is accessible to registered customers of Unocoin. The customers will be able to buy or sell up to 10 Bitcoins — one of the high value cryptocurrencies per day. However, all the transactions will have to be conducted in Indian rupees which will then be changed into the currency of choice of the consumer.
- The kiosk will allow customers to trade in Bitcoin and Ethereum, while providing an exchange platform for 24 other cryptocurrencies in circulation.
- Customers risking the use of Bitcoins will have to register by using their mobile number and entering a password. A verification process is initiated during which details such as PAN number, phone number, address, bank details, and others have to be furnished. It uses an elaborate

procedure for both deposits and withdrawals, with the withdrawals requiring a prior request and 12-digit OTP.

### **BITCOIN**

- Bitcoin is one of many cryptocurrencies that have gained popularity across the world.
- A cryptocurrency is basically a digital asset that has been created to function as a medium of exchange, like cash.
- It uses cryptography to ensure the security of transactions — authentication and prevention of duplicate transactions — and to control the creation of new units of currency.
- This is different from cash in that cryptocurrencies have no physical form. These blur the boundaries between fiat and non-fiat currencies.
- They are simply numbers on a screen and there is no central bank that issues new currency. However, bitcoin has emerged as the popular face of cryptocurrencies.
- A **fiat currency** is any currency that has no intrinsic physical value, but whose value is established by government decree. For example, most national currencies around the world, including the Rupee and the Dollar, are fiat currencies as their values are dictated by the government.
- **Non-fiat currencies** such as the Gold Standard have more or less been effectively phased out, as they require adequate physical stockpiles to maintain their value.

### **CENTRAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION**

*Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is India's premier investigating agency that handles all high-profile cases. Its job is to ensure a fair and an impartial probe. But, recently in October 2018, two of the top officials of the agency have been reported to be involved in a major feud. This has led the Government of India to intervene in order to restore the institutional integrity and credibility of CBI.*

### **BACKGROUND**

- Origins of CBI can be traced back to the Special Police Establishment (SPE) set up in 1941 in order to cases of bribery and corruption in War & Supply Department of India during World War II.
- The need of a Central Government agency to investigate cases of bribery and corruption was felt even after the end of World War II. So, DSPE (Delhi Special Police Establishment) Act, 1946 was brought that gave legal power of investigating cases to CBI.
- CBI is not a statutory body as it is not established by an Act of the Parliament.
- CBI investigates cases related to economic crimes, special crimes, cases of corruption and other high-profile cases.
- CBI comes under the jurisdiction of the **Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.**
- Various organizations under this Ministry are Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), Staff Selection Commission (SSC), Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA), Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), CBI, Central Information Commission (CIC), etc.
- CBI is exempted from Right to Information (RTI) Act similar to National Investigating Agency (NIA), National Intelligence Grid (Natgrid), etc.
- CBI is headed by a Director, an IPS (Indian Police Service) officer of the rank of Director General of Police.

- The director is selected based on CVC Act, 2003 for two years-term. Several other ranks in CBI are filled through recruitment by SSC or deputation from Police, Income Tax Department and Customs Department.
- The appointment procedure of CBI Director has undergone several changes over time.

#### **Initially, appointments were made as per Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946.**

- 2003: DSPE Act revised on Supreme Court's recommendation. A committee that had members from Central Vigilance Commission, Secretaries from Home Ministry, Ministry of Personnel and Public Grievances would send recommendations to Central Government for appointment of CBI Director.
- 2014: The Lokpal Act provided a committee headed by Prime Minister and members as Leader of Opposition/ Leader of single largest opposition party, Chief Justice of India/ a Supreme Court Judge for appointment of CBI Director was formed. Home Ministry sends list of eligible candidates to DoPT that prepares the final list and send it to the committee.
- Established in 1902 by the British Government, CID (Crime Investigation Department) is an investigation and intelligence department of state police. On the other hand, CBI is an agency of the Central Government.
- Central Government can authorize CBI to investigate cases in any state with the consent of the concerned state. Supreme Court and High Courts can also order the CBI to investigate without state's consent.

#### **POKHRAN II**

#### ***India completed 20 years of its journey as a nuclear power on 11 May 2018.***

The nuclear test on Pokhran was conducted by then Prime Minister Mr. A.B. Vajpayee. It was greeted with jubilation in India while it proved to be a surprise for rest of the world which reacted by putting several sanctions to India in the coming years. But, India has now not just overcome the international obstacles, it has been successful in striking nuclear deal with the United States. It also got a waiver from the Nuclear Suppliers Group and became members in 3 out of 4 Multilateral Export Control Regimes.

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Pokhran II refers to India's second round of nuclear tests that were conducted in Pokhran, Jaisalmer, Rajasthan. It was codenamed 'Shakti' which means 'power'.
- The tests were conducted in 5 explosions which involved a fusion device, a hydrogen bomb (thermonuclear) and 3 tests of miniaturised weapons.
- The 1998 tests were conducted in collaboration of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Department of Atomic Energy (DAE). Indian Army had raised a special unit of scientists for the purpose.
- By the successful tests in Pokhran II, India lead into the nuclear powers club. Although India became the sixth nuclear power state after United States, Soviet Union, Britain, France and China in 1974 itself.

#### **BACKGROUND**

- India had conducted its first nuclear test on 18 May 1974 in Pokhran in an operation codenamed 'Smiling Buddha'.
- In 1974, India had conducted peaceful nuclear explosion which was allowed in international law. This had been done by many countries. Thus, purpose of 1974 test was technology demonstration and not weaponization. But, the purpose of 1998 test was weaponizing India's capabilities.

#### **There are 4 Multilateral Exports Control Regimes:**

1. **Wassenaar Arrangement on Export Controls and Dual Use Goods and Technologies**. India became its member in 2017.
2. **Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)** for the control of nuclear related technologies. India has got a waiver in 2008, but its permanent membership in NSG is not supported by China.
3. **Australia Group (AG)** for control of chemical and biological technology that could be weaponised. India became its member in 2018.
4. **Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR)** for the control of rockets and other aerial vehicles capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. India became its member in 2016.

#### **India's nuclear doctrine has been:**

- Credible minimum nuclear deterrence.
- Never use nuclear weapon first.
- Never use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear nations.

#### **NBFC**

***Shares of non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) have witnessed a steep fall in recent weeks after concerns over whether they can successfully meet their short-term dues.***

The current crisis began with the default of Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services on several of its dues last month. The Union government subsequently decided to step in and assure lenders to the company that their money would be paid back safely without any default.

#### **ISSUES**

- Many NBFCs use short-term loans borrowed from the money market to extend long-term loans to their customers. This leads to a mismatch in the duration of their assets and liabilities and exposes NBFCs to the substantial risk of being unable to pay back their lenders on time.
- Such risk is high particularly during times of crisis when lenders are affected by fear. In such cases, they may have to resort to sale of their assets at distress prices to meet their dues. This can turn a liquidity crisis into a more serious solvency crisis, wherein the total value of the assets of a company falls below the value of its total liabilities.
- Further, NBFCs also face the risk of having to pay higher interest rates each time they refinance their short-term debt. As interest rates rise across the globe, equity investors believe that the cost of borrowing of NBFCs will rise and affect their profit margins.
- This is seen as the primary reason behind the fall in the shares of many NBFCs. Investors may be pricing in the prospect of falling profits for NBFCs in the coming quarters.

**NBFC**

- A Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) is a company registered under the Companies Act, 1956 engaged in the business of loans and advances, acquisition of shares/stocks/bonds/debentures/securities issued by Government or local authority or other marketable securities of a like nature, leasing, hire-purchase, insurance business, chit business but does not include any institution whose principal business is that of agriculture activity, industrial activity, purchase or sale of any goods (other than securities) or providing any services and sale/purchase/construction of immovable property.
- A non-banking institution which is a company and has principal business of receiving deposits under any scheme or arrangement in one lump sum or in instalments by way of contributions or in any other manner, is also a non-banking financial company (Residuary non-banking company).
- **NBFCs lend and make investments and hence their activities are akin to that of banks:**
  1. NBFC cannot accept demand deposits.
  2. NBFCs do not form part of the payment and settlement system and cannot issue cheques drawn on itself.
  3. Deposit insurance facility of Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation is not available to depositors of NBFCs, unlike in case of banks.

**PREMATURE DEINDUSTRIALISATION**

- This refers to a phenomenon wherein the growth of an economy's manufacturing sector begins to slow down prematurely in its path towards development.
- Economists generally picture economic development as a process by which labour and other resources gradually move from agriculture to the manufacturing sector before these resources move to the services sector at higher stages of development.
- Some economies, however, may witness a premature movement of resources to the services sector, thus leading to underdevelopment of the manufacturing sector.
- The concept was popularised in 2015 by Turkish economist Dani Rodrik.

**CANINE DISTEMPER VIRUS**

***A canine distemper virus (CDV) has led to many deaths in the Gir sanctuary. In September alone, 21 lions died.***

Wildlife experts say that more than the numbers, it is the fear that mutation in a virus could have caused deaths that is perturbing. Scientists at the National Institute of Virology, Pune have confirmed the CDV virus in only five of the dead lions. But many more may have taken sick. Experts say that the virus may have jumped from dogs to lions.

**What is Canine Distemper?**

- This is a viral disease that is frequent in dogs, foxes, wolves, big cats and even primates. It is caused by a single-stranded RNA virus of the family Paramyxoviridae (the family of viruses causing measles, mumps and bronchiolitis in humans).
- It infects the spinal cord and brain and also the respiratory and gastrointestinal tracts.
- The virus is believed to have a 50% fatality rate in dogs.
- In 1994, the CDV was responsible for an epidemic in the Serengeti region of Africa, where 1,000 lions died in three weeks.

- Its prevalence in India has not been studied and only a few reports are available regarding its detection in wild carnivores.

#### **How can the outbreak be checked?**

- The lion population should be immediately vaccinated with the available vaccine for CDV. At present, most of the available vaccines are made of CDV American genotypes 1 & 2. These have been used in a number of countries and found to be effective.
- As the CDV is transmitted by airborne route as well as infected body secretions, healthy lions from the Gir forest ought to be shifted to an alternative suitable location. Moreover, as many of the Gir lions live outside protected areas and are in contact with domestic dwellings, their susceptibility to new pathogens has risen, according to scientists.
- In 2013, the Supreme Court had called for shifting of some lions from Gujarat to Madhya Pradesh to “to save [them] from extinction, due to catastrophes like epidemic”. However, this is yet to happen.

*However, Wildlife experts say vaccination is a bad idea as it could introduce new complications to the immune systems of the wild lions and make them vulnerable to unknown viruses.*

#### **NATIONAL HEALTH RESOURCE REPOSITORY**

- NHRR is the country’s first ever national healthcare facility registry of authentic, standardized and updated geo-spatial data of all public & private healthcare establishments.
- 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.
- 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.

#### **BOMBAY BLOOD GROUP**

The general types of blood group are A, B, AB and O, Matching of the blood types of the donor and the recipient is vital, else it could lead to serious life-threatening complications.

Apart from the general blood group types like O, A, B, or AB, there is a special type called (hh)-, a rare one first discovered in Bombay in 1952, and hence christened as Bombay Blood.

People who carry this rare blood type, about 1 in 10, 000 Indians, can accept blood only from another Bombay Blood type individual, and not from anyone who is O, A, B or AB type.

#### **QS WORLD RANKING UNIVERSITY**

***QS, the global higher education think tank, has recently released its first standalone ranking of India's higher education institutions.***

Indian University ranking by this think tank is the second country-specific rankings, after it released one for China earlier.

The rankings include Public Universities, Private Universities and deemed universities.

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- According to the recent ranking, IIT Bombay is named India's leading institution.
- Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore secured the second spot followed by IIT Madras in the third place.
- Interestingly, while IISc was India's best institution in the QS World University Rankings released earlier this year, the domestic league has pegged IIT-Bombay at first place.
- This variation is because of the difference in criteria taken in global and domestic level.

#### **CHEETAH REINTRODUCTION PROJECT**

***The Madhya Pradesh forest department has written to the National Tiger Conservation Authority to revive the plan to reintroduce cheetahs in the State's Nauradehi sanctuary.***

- The sanctuary was found to be the most suitable area for the cheetahs as its forests are not very dense to restrict the fast movement and the prey base is also in abundance.
- It is the largest wildlife sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh, extending across the river basins of Narmada and Ganga.
- The project focused on relocating cheetah from Namibia in Africa to Nauradehi sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh.
- This project had hit a roadblock for want of funds.
- Cheetah was declared extinct in India in the year 1952
- Wildlife Institute of India started this ambitious Cheetah Reintroduction Project in 2009.

#### **INDIA – US TRI SERVICES EXERCISE**

***The first India-U.S. tri-services exercise is likely to take place in 2019, and talks are on to include the special forces of the two countries in the drill.***

- The three forces of each country already take part in bilateral exercises separately — their Armies participate in an annual drill called Yudh Aabyas, whose latest edition took place in September, and the Air Forces take part in a bilateral drill called Cope India.
- The Navies participate in an exercise in Malabar, involving Japan.
- But this will be the first time, the three services of India and the U.S. will participate in a drill together.
- The Indian Army has Para SF, the Navy has Marcos while the Air Force has the Garud as their respective special forces.

#### **RBI RELEASED GUIDELINES FOR E-WALLETS**

***The Reserve Bank released operational guidelines to facilitate payments among prepaid instruments (PPI) such as mobile wallets, a move aimed at promoting money transfer between e-wallets and digital transactions.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- It will effectively allow users of popular payment wallets such as Paytm, Freecharge, Mobikwik, PhonePe and PayZapp, among others, to transfer money from one wallet to another.
- In a circular, the RBI said that wallets could implement interoperability through the Unified Payment Interface (UPI).
- The RBI also allowed PPIs to issue cards using authorised card networks such as Mastercard, Visa or RuPay.

- PPI issuers shall adhere to all the requirements of card networks/UPI, including membership type and criteria, merchant on-boarding, adherence to various standards, rules and regulations applicable to the specific payment system such as technical requirements, certifications and audit requirements, governance, etc.
- The guidelines, while boosting the e-wallet segment, would also ensure the safety and accuracy of the transfer of money by individuals from one wallet to another.
- It is a progressive move for nonbank players and would lay the foundation to reach the under-banked and unbanked segment with a powerful payment product.

### **COPE INDIA EXERCISE**

***The U.S. had proposed a trilateral air exercise between India, Japan and the U.S. For this, the Cope India exercise will be elevated to a trilateral level in phases.***

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The next edition is scheduled to be held in December for which the Final Planning Conference to finalise the modalities of the exercise is scheduled next week in Kalaikunda [West Bengal].
- To begin with, it will be a small-level exercise involving transport aircraft in the trilateral format.

### **BACKGROUND**

- Cope India was first conducted in 2004 and has grown in scope with the involvement of fighter aircraft and force multipliers such as Airborne Warning And Control System (AWACS), but has been held only intermittently.
- The level of interoperability in the exercises, both bilateral and trilateral, is expected to go up with India recently signing the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) with the U.S..
- In addition, there is also commonality of platforms, for instance, all the three Air Forces operate the C-130 transport aircraft.
- This elevation of the air exercise is similar to the Malabar naval exercise. Malabar began in 1992 as a bilateral naval exercise between India and the U.S. and has over time grown in scope and complexity.
- In 2015, it was expanded into a trilateral format with the inclusion of Japan. With increased focus on the Indo-Pacific, the U.S. has been keen on increased engagement in a trilateral format.

### **INDIA - FRANCE**

***India and France are in discussions for a bilateral tri-service military exercise. Both the countries are also exploring ways to operationalise the logistics agreement.***

- If India and France concludes on tri-service exercise, it will be India's third such joint exercise.
- The first joint tri-service exercise was held with Russia in October last year and India has finalised one with the U.S. to be held next year.
- India and France signed a logistics pact in March this year which gives access to their militaries to each other's bases for logistics support.
- India can access French bases in the Indian Ocean — Reunion Island, Djibouti and Abu Dhabi.
- These three bases would give the Indian Navy and the Air Force operational turnaround to the far end of the Indian Ocean, improving its monitoring and surveillance of the region, in the backdrop of increased Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

- India and France currently hold bilateral exercises between individual services –
  1. Shakti: Army exercise.
  2. Varuna: Navy
  3. Garuda: Air Force.

### WINDMILLS THREAT TO WILDLIFE

***Windmills are seen as a source of green energy, but researchers say they pose a threat to wildlife in forests through collisions and noise.***

Study by researchers from Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON) found that windmills killed birds and bats in collisions, and that birds and mammals also moved away due to the noise. (leads to conflict with humans)

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History (SACON) is a national centre for information, education and research in ornithology and natural history in India.
- It was inspired by and named in honour of Salim Ali, the leading pioneer of ornithology in India.
- It is an autonomous organisation established in 1990 as a public- NGO partnership between the MoEF&CC and the Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS) under the Centre of Excellence Scheme and registered under the Indian Societies Registration Act.
- Its headquarters are at Anaikatti, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India.
- SACON is associated with the Ministry of Environment and Forests.
- SACON's mission is: "To help conserve India's biodiversity and its sustainable use through research, education and peoples' participation, with birds at the centre stage".

### EXERCISE HAND-IN-HAND

***India and China will resume the annual joint Army exercise 'Hand-in-Hand' in December in China's Chengdu region.***

- The drill was cancelled last year due to tense relations in the aftermath of the Doklam standoff.
- Following the Wuhan summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping in April, the two countries have initiated several measures to normalise relations.
- The scope of the exercise is to understand transnational terrorism and evolve joint drills for the conduct of counter terrorism operations, in addition to Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief operations.
- The exercise will be held in three phases — familiarisation, basic training and the joint exercise.
- Separately, the Army has for the first time organised a forward area tour to Leh on October 16 and 17 for interested foreign service attaches posted in India.