

CURRENT AFFAIRS
22ND TO 31ST OCTOBER 2018

2nd REPORT ON CROSS BORDER INSOLVENCY

The Insolvency Law Committee (ILC) constituted by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs to recommend amendments to Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code of India, 2016 has submitted its 2nd Report to the Government, which deals with cross border insolvency.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The ILC has recommended the adoption of the UNCITRAL Model Law of Cross Border Insolvency, 1997, as it provides for a comprehensive framework to deal with cross border insolvency issues.
- The Committee has also recommended a few carve outs to ensure that there is no inconsistency between the domestic insolvency framework and the proposed Cross Border Insolvency Framework.

BACKGROUND

- The UNCITRAL Model Law has been adopted in as many as 44 countries and, therefore, forms part of international best practices in dealing with cross border insolvency issues.
- The advantages of the model law are the precedence given to domestic proceedings and protection of public interest.
- The other advantages include greater confidence generation among foreign investors, adequate flexibility for seamless integration with the domestic Insolvency Law and a robust mechanism for international cooperation.
- The model law deals with four major principles of cross-border insolvency, namely:
 1. Direct access to foreign insolvency professionals and foreign creditors to participate in or commence domestic insolvency proceedings against a defaulting debtor.
 2. Recognition of foreign proceedings & provision of remedies.
 3. Cooperation between domestic and foreign courts & domestic and foreign insolvency practitioners.
 4. coordination between two or more concurrent insolvency proceedings in different countries.
- The main proceeding is determined by the concept of **centre of main interest ("COMI")**.

WHAT IS THE NEED

The necessity of having Cross Border Insolvency Framework under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code arises from the fact that many Indian companies have a global footprint and many foreign companies have presence in multiple countries including India.

Although the proposed Framework for Cross Border Insolvency will enable us to deal with Indian companies having foreign assets and vice versa, it still does not provide for a framework for dealing with enterprise groups, which is still work in progress with UNCITRAL and other international bodies.

HEALTH & NUTRITION INITIATIVES UNDER ASPIRATIONAL DISTRICT PROGRAMME

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in collaboration with Ministry of Women and Child Development, organized a one-day National Workshop for Orientation of District Officials of Aspirational Districts on Health and Nutrition.

HIGHLIGHTS

- At the function, the State Health Ministers unveiled the Operational Guidelines on Aspirational Districts for Health and Nutrition and launched the e-Mitra Mobile Application.
- This is a first of its kind initiative by identifying 117 districts under the 'Aspirational Districts' Programme with an aim to quickly and effectively transform them.
- 117 districts have been identified for rapid transformation and inclusive growth.

- The Reproductive Maternal New born Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCH+A) program is an important pillar which will be strengthened under Aspirational Districts Programme.
- The **operational guidelines on Aspirational Districts** will provide a framework for implementing action to be undertaken for various health initiatives to guide the state, district, block programme officers and other stakeholders in organizing various activities expected to meet the vision for health by leveraging health and nutrition initiatives to bring transformation in the lives of people and meet their aspirations to be healthy.
- The **e-Mitra (Mobile Integrated Toolkit RMNCH+A) app** has been designed to complement the Aspirational District Programme and offers one stop solution to access RMNCH+A related statistics from different sources through a combination of approaches.

Government is committed to achieving the goals of the National Health Policy 2017, and of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

NATIONAL HEALTH POLICY 2017: The National Health Policy, 2017 (NHP, 2017) seeks to reach everyone in a comprehensive integrated way to move towards wellness. It aims at achieving universal health coverage and delivering quality health care services to all at affordable cost.

Life Expectancy and healthy life

- Increase Life Expectancy at birth from 67.5 to 70 by 2025.
- Establish regular tracking of Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALY) Index as a measure of burden of disease and its trends by major categories by 2022.
- Reduction of TFR to 2.1 at national and sub-national level by 2025.

Mortality by Age and/ or cause

- Reduce Under Five Mortality to 23 by 2025 and MMR from current levels to 100 by 2020.
- Reduce infant mortality rate to 28 by 2019.
- Reduce neo-natal mortality to 16 and still birth rate to “single digit” by 2025.

Reduction of disease prevalence/ incidence

- Achieve global target of 2020 which is also termed as target of 90:90:90, for HIV/AIDS i.e, - 90% of all people living with HIV know their HIV status, - 90% of all people diagnosed with HIV infection receive sustained antiretroviral therapy and 90% of all people receiving antiretroviral therapy will have viral suppression.
- Achieve and maintain elimination status of Leprosy by 2018, Kala-Azar by 2017 and Lymphatic Filariasis in endemic pockets by 2017.
- To achieve and maintain a cure rate of >85% in new sputum positive patients for TB and reduce incidence of new cases, to reach elimination status by 2025.
- To reduce the prevalence of blindness to 0.25/ 1000 by 2025 and disease burden by one third from current levels.
- To reduce premature mortality from cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes or chronic respiratory diseases by 25% by 2025.

5TH EDITION OF WOMEN OF INDIA ORGANIC FESTIVAL

The Ministry of Women and Child Development has organized the 5th edition of the Women of India Organic Festival from 26th October to 4th November, 2018 at Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, New Delhi.

HIGHLIGHTS

- This is aimed to boost organic culture and promote Women Organic Farmers and Entrepreneurs.
- Being the country's largest organic festival, it bears witness to the fact that women are the torchbearers of the nation's organic movement.

- With over 500 women entrepreneurs coming together from across the country with their organic products such as cereals, rice, pulses, skin-care products, fabric, jewellery, etc, this is the perfect example of how the festival is creating a revolution and making women self-reliant.
- For the first time, 'The Vegan Project' and Food Court with cooked-on-site delicacies was also be available.

"MAIN NAHIN HUM" PORTAL & APP

The Prime Minister interacted with IT and electronic manufacturing professionals across India on October 24, 2018, on the occasion of the launch of the "Main Nahin Hum" Portal and App.

HIGHLIGHTS

The portal, which works on the theme "Self4Society", will enable IT professionals and organizations to bring together their efforts towards social causes, and service to society, on one platform.

- In doing so, the portal is expected to help catalyse greater collaboration towards the service of the weaker sections of society, especially by leveraging the benefits of technology.
- It is also expected to generate wider participation of interested people who are motivated to work for the benefit of society.

SIAL PARIS EXHIBITION

Forty-five Indian companies are participating in the SIAL Paris exhibition – the largest international market place for food service professionals.

Trade Promotion Council of India (TPCI) has inaugurated a special Indian pavilion in the mega exhibition for the participating companies.

HIGHLIGHTS

- SIAL Paris is the leading exhibition of food service products with more than 7020 French and international exhibitors from 109 countries displaying their foodstuffs, ranging from ingredients to processed products, including fresh produce.
- The exhibition is one of the most important get-togethers of buyers and sellers interested in dairy products, meat, fresh fruits and vegetables, tinned and preserved foods, semi-processed food products, organic products, health products and food supplements, seafood, and ready-prepared dishes, pet and poultry products and equipment and services.

SIAL PARIS

- SIAL Paris is held every two years, and is famous for culinary demonstrations by famous chefs every day.
- This unique culinary show stages SIAL Paris exhibitors' products on the basis of current topics and trends: locavore cooking, fresh attitude, trends and textures, besides live cuisine lessons.

TRADE PROMOTION COUNCIL OF INDIA

- TPCI is an apex trade and investment promotion organization notified in the Foreign Trade Policy.
- TPCI is also recognized and supported by the Department of Commerce, Govt. of India.
- Work towards facilitating the growth of Indian industry with global investment & trade opportunities.
- The council provides strategies for expanding business internationally, by organizing specialized business events and simultaneously working with the Government by providing policy suggestions which are essentially based on inputs collated from research and industry stakeholders.

STAPCOR 2018

The International Conference on Status and Protection of Coral Reefs (STAPCOR – 2018) with the theme "Reef for Life" was inaugurated by the Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change on 22nd October at Bangaram coral Island of Union Territory of Lakshadweep.

The conference highlighted the importance of coral reefs and the need for its protection, emphasising on converting science into adequate policies for conservation. Evolving effective management strategies leading to restoration of coral reef, along with the practice of green good deed for behavioural change and social responsibility in day to day life was also emphasized.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Lakshadweep will establish an International Atoll Research Centre, with world class infrastructures for scientific research on corals.
- The Department of Environment and Forest, Union Territory of Lakshadweep Administration organised this mega conference with the technical support of Zoological Survey of India and in association with Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, IUCN, ENVIS in consonance with declaration of the year 2018 as 3rd decadal International year of Reefs.

CORAL REEFS

- Coral reefs are large underwater structures composed of the skeletons of colonial marine invertebrates called coral.
- The coral species that build reefs are known as hermatypic, or "hard," corals because they extract calcium carbonate from seawater to create a hard, durable exoskeleton that protects their soft, sac-like bodies.
- Other species of corals that are not involved in reef building are known as "soft" corals. These types of corals are flexible organisms often resembling plants and trees and include species such as sea fans and sea whips.
- Each individual coral is referred to as a polyp. Coral polyps live on the calcium carbonate exoskeletons of their ancestors, adding their own exoskeleton to the existing coral structure
- The corals have a symbiotic, or mutually beneficial, relationship with the zooxanthellae.
- These algae live inside the coral polyp's body where they photosynthesize to produce energy for themselves and the polyps. The polyps, in turn, provide a home and carbon dioxide for the algae. Additionally, the zooxanthellae provide the coral with their lively colours — most coral polyp bodies are clear and colourless without zooxanthellae.

2018 SEOUL PEACE PRIZE

The Seoul Peace Prize Committee has decided to confer the 2018 Seoul Peace Prize on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in recognition of his dedication to improving international cooperation, raising global economic growth, accelerating the Human Development of the people of India by fostering economic growth in the world's fastest growing large economy and furthering the development of democracy through anti-corruption and social integration efforts.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Award Committee recognized Prime Minister Modi's contributions to the growth of the Indian and global economies, crediting 'Modinomics' for reducing social and economic disparity between the rich and the poor.
- The Committee also credited Prime Minister for his contribution towards regional and global peace through a proactive foreign policy with countries around the world under the 'Modi Doctrine' and the 'Act East Policy.'
- Prime Minister Modi is the fourteenth recipient of this award.

BACKGROUND

- The Seoul Peace Prize was established in 1990 to commemorate the success of the 24th Olympic Games held in Seoul, Republic of Korea – an event in which 160 nations from across the world took part, creating harmony and friendship and a worldwide atmosphere of peace and reconciliation.

- The Seoul Peace Prize was established to crystallize the Korean people's yearning for peace on the Korean Peninsula and in the rest of the world.
- The Seoul Peace Prize has been awarded biennially to those individuals who have made their mark through contributions to the harmony of mankind, reconciliation between nations and to world peace.
- Past laureates include distinguished global personalities like former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and renowned international relief organizations like Doctors Without Borders and Oxfam.

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SKILLS

The Union Cabinet has approved the for setting up of Indian Institute of Skills (IISs) at different locations across the country in Public Private Partnership (PPP), which will be explored for promotion of IIS at select locations based on demand and available infrastructure.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The setting up of IISs shall augment the global competitiveness of key sectors of Indian economy by providing high quality skill training, applied research education and a direct and meaningful connection with industry.
- It will provide opportunity to aspiring youth across the country to have access to highly skilled training, and enhance the scope of accountability through its linkage with industry and global competitiveness across sectors.
- By leveraging advantages of private sector enterprise and public capital in terms of Government land, it would create new institutes of expertise, knowledge and competitiveness.

ADJUDICATING AUTHORITY & APPELLATE TRIBUNAL UNDER PBPT ACT

The Union Cabinet has approved the appointment of Adjudicating Authority and establishment of Appellate Tribunal under Prohibition of Benami Property Transactions Act (PBPT), 1988.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Appointment of an Adjudicating Authority, along with the three additional Benches and to establish the Appellate Tribunal under the PBPT Act.
- To provide the officers and employees to Adjudicating Authority, Benches of the Adjudicating Authority and Appellate Tribunal by diverting the existing posts at the same level/rank from the Income Tax Department /Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT).
- The **Adjudicating Authority and Appellate Tribunal** shall sit in the National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCTD).
- Benches of Adjudicating Authority may sit in Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai, and the necessary notification in this regard shall be issued after making consultation with the Chairperson of the proposed Adjudicating Authority.
- The approval will result in effective and better administration of cases referred to the Adjudicating Authority and speedy disposal of appeals filed against the order of the Adjudicating Authority before the Appellate Tribunal.
- Appointment of the Adjudicating Authority would provide first stage review of administrative action under the PBPT Act.
- Establishment of the proposed Appellate Tribunal would provide an appellate mechanism for the order passed by the Adjudicating Authority under the PBPT Act.

BIOFACH INDIA

Government of India is preparing agro specific zones under the new Agriculture Export Policy which will be unveiled soon announced at the inauguration of BIOFACH INDIA which is the world's largest event on

organic industry organized by Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) and Indo-German of Commerce in New Delhi.

HIGHLIGHTS

- India produces nearly 600 MT of agri products including horticultural produce and its strategy is to increase farmer's income by doubling it and reducing the wastage of food products to the bare minimum. Alongside domestic strategy, the Government is also focusing on exporting agricultural products to the world. There is need to cater to the niche market of organic food.
- India ranks first in terms of total number of organic producers and 9th in terms of worlds organic agricultural land.
- The Government of India has implemented the **National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP)** which is organised by the European Commission and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Due to these certifications India's organic products are accepted by importing countries.
- In 2017-18 India produced around 1.70 MT of certified organic products which includes all varieties of food products like oilseeds, sugarcane, cereals and millets, cotton, pulses, medicinal plants, tea, fruits, spices, dry fruits, vegetables and coffee.
- India's organic products are exported to USA, EU, Canada, Switzerland, Australia, Israel, South Korea, Vietnam, New Zealand and Japan.

NATIONAL MONITORING FRAMEWORK ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

The Union Cabinet has approved the constitution of a High-Level Steering Committee for periodically reviewing and refining the National Indicator Framework (NIF) for monitoring of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with associated targets.

The High-Level Steering Committee will be chaired by Chief Statistician of India and Secretary, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), with the Secretaries of data source Ministries and NITI Aayog's members and Secretaries of other related Ministries as special invitees, with function of reviewing of National Indicator Framework including refinement of the indicators from time to time.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Measures to mainstream SDGs into on-going national policies, programmes and strategic action plans to address the developmental challenges.
- Statistical indicators of NIF will be the backbone of monitoring of SDGs at the national and state level and will scientifically measure the outcomes of the policies to achieve the targets under different SDGs.
- Based on statistical indicator, the MoSPI will bring out national reports on implementation of SDGs.
- The Report will facilitate assessment of progress, identify challenges and give recommendations for follow up at the national level.
- High Level Steering Committee will review the National Indicator Framework on regular basis for its improvement.
- Data source Ministries / Departments will be responsible for providing regular information to MoSPI on these indicators at required intervals and disaggregation for national and sub-national reporting of SDGs.
- Advanced IT tools will be used for close and effective monitoring.

IMPACTS

- SDGs integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions of development. It intends eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world with basic motto of 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas'.
- SDGs with 17 Goals and 169 Targets intend for promotion of sustainable, inclusive and equitable economic growth, creating greater opportunities for all, reducing inequalities, raising basic standards of living, fostering equitable social development and inclusion, promoting integrated and sustainable management of natural resources and ecosystems.
- NIF will help in outcome-based monitoring & reporting on progress on SDGs at National level.

- There is no direct financial implication on implementation of the National Indicator Framework. However, the respective Ministries will need to re-align and strengthen their data systems to facilitate monitoring of the SDG indicators.
- SDGs are expected to bring change in the lives of people and the monitoring of progress of implementation of SDGs will benefit the entire nation.

BACKGROUND

- At the Millennium Summit held in 2000 at the UN Headquarters in New York, eight development goals known as the 'Millennium Development Goals' (MDGs) were adopted, which formed the blueprint for countries to pursue their national development strategies from 2000 to 2015.
- The MDGs comprised eight Goals and addressed various development issues.
- The UN General Assembly in its 70th Session considered and adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the next 15 years.
- The 17 SDGs came into force with effect from 1st January, 2016. Though not legally binding, the SDGs have become de facto international obligations and have potential to reorient domestic spending priorities of the countries during the next fifteen years.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



- The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were born at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012.
- The objective was to produce a set of universal goals that meet the urgent environmental, political and economic challenges facing our world.
- The SDGs replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which started a global effort in 2000 to tackle the indignity of poverty.
- The MDGs established measurable, universally-agreed objectives for tackling extreme poverty and hunger, preventing deadly diseases, and expanding primary education to all children, among other development priorities.

FISHERIES & AQUACULTURE INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT FUND

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for creation of special Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF).

The approval entails an estimated fund size of Rs.7,522 crore, comprising Rs.5,266.40 crore to be raised by the Nodal Lending Entities (NLEs), Rs. 1,316.6 crore beneficiary's contribution and Rs.939.48 crore budgetary

support from the Government of India. National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD), National Cooperatives Development Corporation (NCDC) and all scheduled Banks (hereinafter referred as Banks) shall be the nodal Loaning Entities.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Creation of fisheries infrastructure facilities both in marine and Inland fisheries sectors.
- To augment fish production to achieve its target of 15 million tonne by 2020 set under the Blue Revolution; and to achieve a sustainable growth of 8% -9% thereafter to reach the fish production to the level of about 20 MMT by 2022-23.
- Employment opportunities to over 9.40 lakh fishers/fishermen/fisherfolk and other entrepreneurs in fishing and allied activities.
- To attract private investment in creation and management of fisheries infrastructure facilities.
- Adoption of new technologies.
- FIDF would provide concessional finance to State Governments / UTs and State entities, cooperatives, individuals and entrepreneurs etc., for taking up of the identified investment activities of fisheries development.
- Under FIDF, loan lending will be over a period of five years from 2018-19 to 2022-23 and maximum repayment will be over a period of 12 years inclusive of moratorium of two years on repayment of principal.

TAGORE AWARD

The Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony for the years 2014, 2015 & 2016 is being conferred on the doyen of Manipuri dance Rajkumar Singhajit Singh; Chhayanaut (a cultural organization of Bangladesh) and on one of India's greatest sculptors, Ram Vanji Sutar, respectively.

HIGHLIGHTS

Rajkumar Singhajit Singh, a doyen of Manipuri dance, has distinguished himself both as an outstanding teacher, performer and choreographer.

- His work over the years bears witness to his creativity within the framework of traditional Manipuri dance.
- His choreography has been enriched by elements incorporated from various forms of performing arts of Manipur such as Thang-ta, Nata-Sankirtana, Lai-haraoba and Rasleela.
- The award recognizes his contribution in keeping the tradition of Manipuri dance alive and vibrant, promoting harmony through dance and also pays tribute to Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, who, deeply influenced by Manipuri dance, made it an integral part of the education curriculum at Visva Bharati.

Chhayanaut, established in 1961, has played a leading role in promoting Tagore's works and Bengali culture, music and literature not only within Bangladesh, but all across the world.

- It has built a close bridge of understanding and cultural exchange between Bangladesh and India, especially West Bengal.
- Chhayanaut was part of the movement for an independent Bangladesh and provided a platform for cultural expression and assertion of Bengali identity. When Rabindra Sangeet was banned in East Pakistan, Chhayanaut continued to promote liberal expression through secret renditions of Tagore songs and discussions on Tagore.

Ram Vanji Sutar is one of the greatest living sculptors of India.

- He has created more than fifty monumental sculptures in the last forty years of his career.
- At the beginning of his career, he was involved in restoring several ancient sculptures found in the caves of Ellora and Ajanta.

- His first notable work was the 45 feet Chambal monument at the Gandhi Sagar Dam, in Madhya Pradesh. This gigantic masterpiece carved out of a single block depicts mother Chambal with her two children- Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan symbolizing the brotherhood of the two states.
- His iconic bust of Mahatma Gandhi is one of the most celebrated representations of the Mahatma, as is his bronze bust of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore.

TAGORE AWARD

- The annual award was instituted by the Government of India during the commemoration of 150th Birth Anniversary of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore.
- The first Tagore Award was conferred on Pt. Ravi Shankar, the Indian Sitar Maestro in 2012 and second was conferred on Shri Zubin Mehta in 2013.
- The award carries an amount of Rs. 1 crore, a citation in a scroll, a plaque as well as an exquisite traditional handicraft/ handloom item.
- The award is open to all persons regardless of nationality, race, language, caste, creed or sex.

INDIA WINS CAPAM AWARD, 2018

The Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG), Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions is an institutional member of Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM) which is a non-profit association representing an international network of over 1100 senior public servants, Heads of Government, leading academics and researchers located in over 50 different countries across the Commonwealth.

BACKGROUND

The association is guided by international leaders who believe in the value of networking, knowledge exchange and the promotion of good governance for the betterment of citizens in the Commonwealth countries. CAPAM has been announcing its International Innovations Awards (IIA) Programme bi-annually, since 1998.

HIGHLIGHTS

Government of India had sent entries for CAPAM International Innovations Awards, 2018 under various categories.

The CAPAM Awards celebrate the spirit of innovation in the public service by recognizing organizations that have made significant contributions to improve governance and services in the public sector.

- The initiative entitled ***“Unnayan Banka- Reinventing Education Using Technology of Banka District, State of Bihar has been awarded under the Category “Innovation Incubation”.***
- “Unnayan Banka” is an initiative which envisages “Quality education for all’ especially for those at the bottom of the Pyramid, using latest technologies.
- It’s a holistic model of overall development of youths from Education to Employability.
- One of the most important Millennium Development Goals, “Education” is the great social Mobiliser & must be everyone’s Birth right and it is Government of India’s endeavour to provide this to all its children.
- Another initiative entitled ***“Unified Agriculture Markets”*** of Co-operation Department of Government of Karnataka has also been selected under the Category ‘Innovation in Public Service Management’. This initiative has also been awarded the overall Gold Award for CAPAM Awards, 2018.

GOGHA-DAHEJ RO-PAX FERRY SERVICE

The Gogha- Dahej Ro-Pax Ferry service is all ready to start under the Sagarmala programme of the Ministry of Shipping. In a successful trial run conducted recently, 12 loaded trucks were transported by the Ro- Pax ferry from Dahej to Gogha across the Gulf of Cambay, via the sea route. The land route between the two places involves a 294 km or 8 hours drive. The travel time gets reduced to just 1.5 hours.

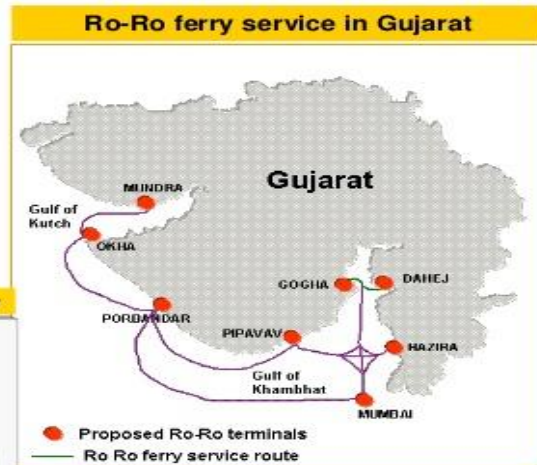
HIGHLIGHTS

- The fully operational Ro Pax service with carrying capacity of 100 vehicles and 500 passengers will be opened on 27 October 2018.
- The Sagarmala programme is touching the lives of people. Gogha-Dahej Ro-Pax Ferry service is all set to connect Saurashtra and South Gujarat.
- The total cost of the project is estimated to be Rs 615 Crore of which Rs.117 Crore has been funded by Central Government under the Sagarmala programme with the main objective of promoting coastal shipping and reducing logistics costs.

Gujarat Ports: Ro-Ro Ferry (Passenger & Vehicles)

- ▶ With two gulfs dividing the State in three parts, **Gujarat is an ideal location for Ro-Ro ferry service operation.**
- ▶ **GMB has decided to develop the Ro-Ro ferry terminal at (Gogha and Dahej)** the cost of approximately Rs 171.00 crores (USD 32 million) in **Phase-I** and will extend upto **Mumbai in Phase - II**

Concept and Development Model of Ro-Ro Ferry



- The initiative would not only reduce the travel time but also result in savings in fuel, reduction in CO2 emission and reduction in road congestion.
- The project is first of its kinds in India as it is being executed in the area of world's 2nd highest tidal range.
- The project would open up new avenues in coastal shipping & tourism and help in socio-economic development of proximate areas.

WEB PORTAL "SPARC"

The Ministry of Human Resource Development launched the web portal of the Scheme "Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC)" in New Delhi.

BACKGROUND

- Government in August 2018 had sanctioned the scheme "Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration (SPARC)" at a total cost of Rs.418 Cr for implementation up to 31.3.2020 and **Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur is the National Coordinating Institute to implement the SPARC programme.**
- Under this Scheme, 600 joint research proposals will be awarded for 2 years to facilitate strong research collaboration between Indian research groups with the best in class faculty and renowned research groups in the leading universities of the world, in areas that are at the cutting edge of science or with direct social relevance to the mankind, specifically India.

HIGHLIGHTS

- This scheme will improve research ecosystem of India's higher educational institutions by facilitating academic and research collaborations between Indian Institutions [overall top-100 or category-wise top-100 in NIRF (including such Private Institutions which are recognized under 12(B) of UGC Act)] and the best institutions in the world (top-500 overall and top-200 subject-wise institutions listed in QS World University Ranking) from 28 selected nations to jointly solve problems of national and international relevance.
- A set of 5 Thrust Areas (***Fundamental Research, Emergent Areas of Impact, Convergence, Action-Oriented Research and Innovation-Driven***) and sub-theme areas in each thrust area has been identified for collaboration under SPARC based on emergent relevance and importance for the nation.
- Each Thrust Area will have a Section Chair. The role of Section Chair of each Thrust Area is to review shortlist and recommend the potential joint-proposals submitted under SPARC scheme.
- The role of ***a Nodal Institutions*** is to help, handhold and coordinate with willing Participating Indian (PI) Institutions to forge alliance with the Institutions of concerned participating foreign country, for academic and research collaboration.
- **SPARC proposes to enable productive academic cooperation by supporting the following critical components that can catalyze impact making research:**
 - i) Visits and long-term stay of top international faculty/researchers in Indian institutions to pursue teaching and research.
 - ii) Visits by Indian students for training and experimentation in premier laboratories worldwide.
 - iii) Joint development of niche courses, world-class books and monographs, translatable patents, demonstrable technologies or action-oriented research outcomes and products.
 - iv) Publication, Dissemination and Visibility through a high profile annual international conference in India.

ADIP-RVY CAMP

An ADIP-RVY Distribution Camp for free of cost distribution of Aids and Assistive Living Devices to Divyangjans and Senior Citizens in BPL category under Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY) was organized by the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment Department, in New Delhi.

- Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO), a PSU working under the aegis of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment organized it in close association.
- The categories of Divyangjans have been increased from 7 to 21 and the reservation quota of Divyangjans has been increased from 3% to 4%.
- The work of Universal ID Card for Divyangjans is in progress.

ADIP SCHEME: The main objective of the Assistance to Disabled persons for purchasing / fitting of aids / appliances (ADIP) scheme is to assist the needy disabled persons in procuring durable, sophisticated and scientifically manufactured, modern, standard aids and appliances that can promote their physical, social and psychological rehabilitation, by reducing the effects of disabilities and enhance their economic potential. The aids and appliances supplied under the Scheme shall conform to BIS specifications to the extent possible.

A person with disabilities fulfilling following conditions would be eligible for assistance under ADIP Scheme through authorized agencies:

- He/she should be an Indian citizen of any age.
- Should be certified by a Registered Medical Practitioner that he/she is disabled and fit to use prescribed aid/appliance. Holds a 40% Disablement Certificate.
- Person who is employed/self-employed or getting pension and whose monthly income from all sources does not exceed Rs. 20,000/- per month.
- In case of dependents, the income of parents/guardians should not exceed Rs. 20,000/- per month.

- Persons who have not received assistance from the Government, local bodies and Non-Official Organisations during the last 3 years for the same purpose. However, for children below 12 years of age this limit would be 1 year.

RASHTRIYA VAYOSHRI YOJANA

Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana is scheme for providing Physical Aids and Assisted-living Devices for Senior citizens belonging to BPL category.

- This is a Central Sector Scheme, fully funded by the Central Government.
- The expenditure for implementation of the scheme will be met from the "Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund".
- The Scheme will be implemented through the sole implementing agency - Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation (ALIMCO), a PSU under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- The Scheme duration is for period of the 3 years ie. upto 2019-20.

FEATURES

- Free of cost distribution of the devices, commensurate with the extent of disability/infirmity that is manifested among the eligible senior citizens.
- In case of multiple disabilities/infirmities manifested in the same person, the assistive devices will be given in respect of each disability/impairment.
- ALIMCO will undertake one year free maintenance of the aids & assisted living devices.
- Beneficiaries in each district will be identified by the State Governments/UT Administrations through a Committee chaired by the Deputy Commissioner/District Collector.
- As far as possible, 30% of the beneficiaries in each district shall be women.
- The State Government/UT Administration/District Level Committee can also utilize the data of BPL beneficiaries receiving Old Age Pension under the NSAP or any other Scheme of the State/UT for identification of senior citizens belonging to BPL category.
- The devices will be distributed in Camp mode.

1ST MEGA FOOD PARK IN GUJARAT

Union Minister for Food Processing Industries inaugurated the first Mega Food Park in Gujarat. The Park is located at Village Shah and Vasravi, Taluka Mangrol, District Surat. A 2nd Mega Food Park has been sanctioned by the Ministry in Mehsana District of Gujarat.

Aimed at giving a major boost to the food processing sector by adding value and reducing food wastage at each stage of the supply chain with particular focus on perishables, Ministry of Food Processing Industries is implementing Mega Food Park Scheme in the country.

- Mega Food Parks create modern infrastructure facilities for food processing along the value chain from farm to market with strong forward and backward linkages through a cluster-based approach.
- Common facilities and enabling infrastructure created at Central Processing Centre and facilities for primary processing and storage is created near the farm in the form of Primary Processing Centers (PPCs) and Collection Centers (CCs).
- Under the Scheme, Government of India provides financial assistance upto Rs. 50.00 Crore per Mega Food Park project.

GREEN CRACKERS

CSIR scientists have developed Less Polluting Firecrackers which are not only environment friendly but 15-20 % cheaper than the conventional ones.

These crackers have been named as safe water releaser (SWAS), safe minimal aluminium (SAFAL) and safe thermite cracker (STAR).

First time in India, an Emission testing Facility has been established at CSIR-NEERI and extensive testing is in progress for conventional and green crackers for monitoring the emissions and sound.

HIGHLIGHTS

It has unique property of releasing water vapour and /or air as dust suppressant and diluent for gaseous emissions and matching performance in sound with conventional crackers.

- SWAS crackers eliminates usage of (KNO₃) Potassium nitrate and Sulphur with consequent reduction in particulate matter (30-35%) SO₂ and NO_x. It has matching sound intensity with commercial crackers in the range of 105-110 dBA. SWAS has been tested for shelf life upto 3 weeks with consistent performance.
- STAR eliminates usage of KNO₃ and S with consequent reduction in particulate matter (35-40%), SO₂ and NO_x. It has matching sound intensity with commercial crackers in the range of 105-110 dBA.
- SAFAL has minimal usage of aluminium (only in flash powder for initiation) with consequent significant reduction in particulate matter (35-40 %) compared to commercial crackers. It has matching sound intensity with commercial crackers in the range of 110-115 dBA.

PESO has been approached to analyse and test SWAS/STAR/SAFAL from point of view of safety, stability and other related issues.

Also, functional prototypes of flower pots for substitution of BaNO₃(Barium nitrate) by low cost eco-friendly materials have been developed with significant reduction in particulate matter (30-35%).

EASE OF DOING BUSINESS REPORT 2019

The World Bank released its latest Doing Business Report (DBR, 2019) in New Delhi.

HIGHLIGHTS

- India has recorded a jump of 23 positions against its rank of 100 in 2017 to be placed now at 77th rank among 190 countries assessed by the World Bank.
- The Doing Business assessment provides objective measures of business regulations and their enforcement across 190 economies on **ten parameters** affecting a business through its life cycle.
- The DBR ranks countries on the basis of Distance to Frontier (DTF), a score that shows the gap of an economy to the global best practice.
- This year, India's DTF score improved to 67.23 from 60.76 in the previous year.
- India has improved its rank in 6 out of 10 indicators and has moved closer to international best practices (Distance to Frontier score) on 7 out of the 10 indicators.
- But, the most dramatic improvements have been registered in the indicators related to 'Construction Permits' and 'Trading across Borders'.

INDIA'S PERFORMANCE

- The World Bank has recognized India as one of the top improvers for the year.
- This is the second consecutive year for which India has been recognized as one of the top improvers.
- India is the first BRICS and South Asian country to be recognized as top improvers in consecutive years.
- India has recorded the highest improvement in two years by any large country since 2011 in the Doing business assessment by improving its rank by 53 positions.
- As a result of continued performance, India is now placed at first position among South Asian countries as against 6th in 2014.

INDIA'S LARGEST DRY DOCK

The Union Minister for Shipping, Road Transport & Highways, Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation Nitin Gadkari and Kerala Chief Minister Shri Pinarayi Vijayan laid the foundation for India's largest Dry Dock at Cochin Shipyard in Kerala.

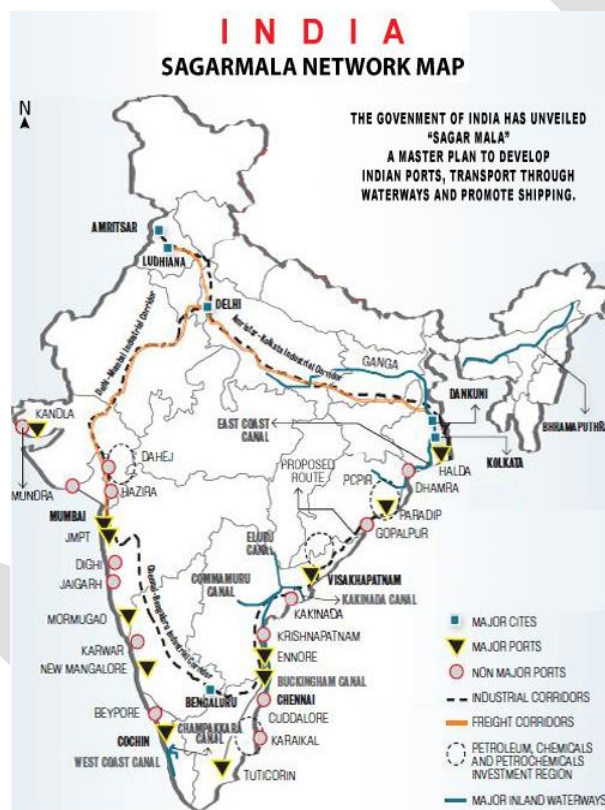
BACKGROUND

The Dry Dock will give an impetus to "Make in India" initiative under Sagarmala and raise India's share in global shipbuilding to 2 percent. India currently occupies 0.66 % share in global shipbuilding market. The commercial ship building industry in India is worth Rs. 3,200 Crore and focuses primarily on small-medium sized offshore vessels and cargo/bulk carriers.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The new Dry Dock is being constructed at a cost of Rs 1799 Crore. It will be 310 m long, 75m wide, with a depth of 13 m and draught of 9.5m.
- The dock will be designed to handle both ship building and repairs, and bear a load up to 600 T/m.
- The dock will also have a water treatment plant and Green Belt Development. Equipped with this Dry Dock, Cochin Shipyard will be able to build specialized and technologically advanced large vessels like LNG Carriers, drill ships, jack up rigs, large dredgers, aircraft carriers for Indian Navy and high-end research vessels.
- It will also help make Cochin a one stop maritime hub for all repair needs in South East Asia.
- The project is expected to be completed by May 2021.

SAGARMALA PROJECT



- Sagarmala Programme is large transport and logistics project in India.
- The Sagarmala Programme is the flagship programme of the Ministry of Shipping to promote port-led development in the country through harnessing India's 7,500 km long coastline, 14,500 km of potentially navigable waterways and strategic location on key international maritime trade routes.
- Sagarmala aims to modernize India's Ports so that port-led development can be augmented and coastlines can be developed to contribute in India's growth.
- It also aims for "transforming the existing Ports into modern world class Ports and integrate the development of the Ports, the Industrial clusters and hinterland and efficient evacuation systems through road, rail, inland and coastal waterways resulting in Ports becoming the drivers of economic activity in coastal areas."

INVEST INDIA

In an effort to fuel the growth of India's entrepreneurial and small business community, Invest India through its flagship initiative Start-up India Hub has partnered with WhatsApp on a program that focuses on the proliferation of start-ups, promoting economic growth and generating employment opportunities in India.

HIGHLIGHTS

- WhatsApp will invest quarter of a million dollars as seed funding to the top 5 winners of the 'WhatsApp Start-up Challenge' and an additional \$ 250,000 will be directed to a select few from the entrepreneurial community to promote their WhatsApp business number on Facebook and drive discovery of their businesses. This way customers will be able to find the business and start talking to them on that WhatsApp number.
- Invest India is also working with WhatsApp to drive awareness about its business tools in around 15 states impacting over 60,000 businesses in the coming months through tools such as Start-up India 'Yatra' program and other in-person training events.

BACKGROUND

Launched on 16th January 2016 by the Prime Minister of India, Start-up India, set-up under Invest India, is a flagship initiative of the Government of India and is intended to build a strong eco-system for nurturing innovation & Start-ups in the country that will drive sustainable economic growth and generate large scale employment opportunities.

UNWTO

The Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Tourism, K. J. Alphons along with a delegation of senior officials has attended the 109th session of United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Executive Council in Manama, Bahrain.

India will be the chair of Programme and Budget Committee of UNWTO Executive Council till 2021.

UNWTO

- The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.
- The UNWTO Executive Council represents the Organization's governing body whose task is to take all necessary measures in consultation with the Secretary-General, for implementation of its own decisions and recommendations of the Assembly and report thereupon to the Assembly.
- The Council meets at least twice a year, the next to be held in Bahrain.
- The council consists of 35 Full Members elected by the assembly in proportion of one member for every Five Full Members, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure laid down by the Assembly with a view to achieving fair and equitable geographical distribution.

TRAFFICKING OF PERSONS (PREVENTION, PROTECTION & REHABILITATION) BILL, 2018

The Bill creates a law for investigation of all types of trafficking, and rescue, protection and rehabilitation of trafficked victims.

- The Bill provides for the establishment of investigation and rehabilitation authorities at the district, state and national level.
- Anti-Trafficking Units will be established to rescue victims and investigate cases of trafficking. Rehabilitation Committees will provide care and rehabilitation to the rescued victims.
- The Bill classifies certain purposes of trafficking as 'aggravated' forms of trafficking. These include trafficking for forced labour, bearing children, begging, or for inducing early sexual maturity. Aggravated trafficking attracts a higher punishment.

- The Bill sets out penalties for several offences connected with trafficking. In most cases, the penalties set out are higher than the punishment provided under prevailing laws.

ANALYSIS

- Certain forms of trafficking specified in the Bill (like forced labour and sexual exploitation) are also covered by existing laws. Some provisions of the Bill are different from provisions for similar circumstances in such laws. As these laws are not being repealed, there may be uncertainty in the implementation of the Bill.
- The Bill punishes an owner or lessor of a premise if he knowingly allows trafficking to be carried out on the premise. Under the Bill, the owner or lessor is presumed to have knowledge of the offence, unless they can prove otherwise. This provision may violate Article 21 of the Constitution.
- The Bill provides immunity to a victim only if he commits an offence punishable with imprisonment of more than ten years and not for lesser offences. The high threshold may defeat the purpose for providing immunity.
- The Bill provides for punishment of persons who distribute or publish material which may lead to trafficking. It is unclear as to how it will be determined if the act is likely to result in trafficking.
- The Bill classifies certain forms of trafficking as 'aggravated', which attract a higher punishment than other forms. Therefore, the punishment for some of the aggravated offences such as begging is higher than the punishment for some other offences such as slavery.

GROUNDWATER BILL

The Union Ministry of Water Resources has put up a Model Bill for Conservation, Protection and Regulation of Groundwater. Comprehensively drafted by a team of Elinor Ostrom, the bill seeks to move groundwater away from its current avatar under the Easements Act as a private property resource to a Common Pool Resource. The State will hold groundwater as a resource in public trust.

In the true spirit of decentralisation and the principle of subsidiarity, it seeks to empower Gram Panchayats and Nagar palikas through a process of Gram Sabhas and Ward Sabhas to develop management plans for groundwater use in public domain and through people's participation and approval.

OBJECTIVES

1. Ensure the realisation of the fundamental right to life through the provision of water.
2. Meet food security, livelihoods, basic human needs, livestock and aquatic life.
3. Protect ecosystems and their biological diversity.
4. Reduce and prevent pollution and degradation of groundwater.

CHALLENGES

- One of the biggest challenges for sustainable management of groundwater comes from overexploitation and overuse, beyond the annual recharge.
- The other comes from pollution, from natural mineral occurrences such as with fluoride and arsenic and with man-made sources such as industrial effluents, fertilizers and sewage.

HIGHLIGHTS

- To combat the above issues, the Act proposes the demarcation of 'groundwater protection zones' based on the latest dynamic resource assessment of the Central Groundwater Board and State agencies and the mapping of aquifers and sub-aquifers, a process which is ongoing.
- This then will lead to the development of a groundwater security plan which through a process of recharge and demand management will result in attainment of sufficient quantity of safe water for life and sustainable livelihood and ensuring water security even in times of drought and floods.

- For the institutional framework, the Act sees the setting up of a groundwater sub-committee under the village water and sanitation committee by the Gram Panchayat. This will be supervised by a Block Panchayat, which will consolidate the groundwater security plans of all Gram Panchayats in its ambit.
- In urban areas, the Model Bill envisages the setting up of ward groundwater committees which will plan, approve and facilitate the implementation of Ward Groundwater Security Plan. This will be overseen by a Municipal Water Management Committee.
- On top of these layers will be a District Groundwater Council and State Groundwater Advisory Council to appropriately integrate and take decisions at their scale.
- The Model Bill seeks to place certain responsibilities on the groundwater user: for example, its efficient use, its prevention from pollution, replenishing and recharging groundwater.
- For industrial users there are several checks and includes the recommendation to charge for groundwater use, the monies so begot being invested for the sustainability of the resource.

While the bill has been drafted with care and is comprehensive, yet it is at a draft stage and will need several inputs, especially from industrial users of groundwater and those in the peri-urban areas. It is unlikely that the bill will work in urban areas, being extremely idealistic in its assumption of the existence and capabilities of local governments. This holds true for gram panchayats too. Eventually the bill will need to be adopted by States and will be modified based on their local conditions, institutional, legal and governance related as well as aquifer related differences.

FINANCIAL STABILITY & DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

The council has met recently to discuss the issue of real interest rate, current liquidity situation.

BACKGROUND

- FSDC was established in 2010 with Union Finance Minister as its Chairman.
- Its members include:
 - i. The heads of financial sector regulators (RBI, SEBI, PFRDA, and IRDA).
 - ii. Finance Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs.
 - iii. Secretary, Department of Financial Services.
 - iv. Chief Economic Adviser.
 - v. Chairman of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board
- FSDC has two core functions:
 - i. To perform as an apex level forum to strengthen and institutionalize the mechanism for maintaining financial stability.
 - ii. To enhance inter-regulatory coordination and promote financial sector development in the country.
- It focuses on financial literacy and financial inclusion.
- It monitors macro-prudential supervision of the economy and also assess the functioning of the large financial conglomerates.
- FSDC sub-committee is chaired by the Governor of RBI.

COMMERCIAL PAPERS

Small and mid-size NBFCs and Micro Finance Institutions (MFI) are going to face the liquidity crunch due to redemption of commercial papers due in November-March. Anticipating liquidity crunch, the RBI has announced Rs. 40,000-crore liquidity infusion in November through open market operations.

COMMERCIAL PAPERS

- Commercial Papers are issued by companies with high-quality debt ratings for raising money to meet their short-term liabilities.

- Corporations, financial institutions, wealthy individuals and money market funds are usually buyers of commercial paper.
- It is usually issued at a discount from face value and reflects prevailing market interest rates.
- Maturities on commercial paper are usually no longer than 9 months.
- Unlike banks, Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFC) do not have access to low-cost public deposits and have to heavily rely upon commercial paper and commercial debt markets.
- Banks and Mutual Funds are the main source of funding through commercial papers to NBFCs and housing finance companies.
- While large MFIs have access to bank finance, the mid-sized and smaller ones depend on funds from NBFCs.

DAL NAGEEN LAKE

J&K administration has appointed an official for conducting a comprehensive bathymetric survey (study of underwater depth of lake or ocean floors) of the Dal-Nageen lake.

- The Nageen lake in Srinagar is a deep blue water offshoot of the Dal lake that is interconnected by a thin causeway.
- The lake is located to the east of the city of Srinagar, at the foothill of the Zabarwan Mountain.
- The Nageen lake is surrounded by a large number of willow and poplar trees. Hence, it has been referred as a "nageena", which means "the jewel in the ring".

MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX

UNDP and Oxford University released the report on Global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) 2018. This report covers 105 countries.

The MPI is based on **10 indicators**: **Health, child mortality, years of schooling, school attendance, cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, electricity, housing and assets.**

IN INDIA'S CONTEXT

India has made momentous progress in reducing multidimensional poverty. The incidence of multidimensional poverty was almost halved between 2005/6 and 2015/16, climbing down to 27.5 per cent.

The global Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) was cut by half due to deeper progress among the poorest. Thus, within ten years, the number of poor people in India fell by more than 271 million — a truly massive gain". The report also says that the poorest groups had the biggest reduction in MPI during the period 2005/6 to 2015/16, indicating they have been "catching up".

BACKGROUND

- The estimates of poverty-based on consumer expenditure and using the **Tendulkar committee** methodology show over a seven-year period between 2004-05 and 2011-12, the number of poor came down by 137 million despite an increase in population.
- According to the **Rangarajan Committee** methodology, the decline between 2009-10 and 2011-12 is 92 million, which is 46 million per annum. For a decade, it will be larger than that of global MPI.
- The poverty ratios based on Tendulkar and Rangarajan Committee methodologies are lower than as estimated by global MPI.

CONCERNS

- India have reservations on using multiple indicators as these multidimensional indicators/measures raise several issues regarding their measurability, aggregation across indicators, and, crucially, of databases that provide the requisite information at reasonably short intervals. These need to be considered and evaluated carefully.

- Aggregation is another problem. In principle, they should be independent. Access to safe drinking water, for example, cannot be aggregated with indicators like child mortality.
- Even in respect of independent indicators, analytically appropriate rules of aggregation require that all of them relate to the same household. More generally, this requirement poses several data constraints.

FACTS

- In recent years, there has been a lot of discussion on increasing inequality. It is true that rising inequality has adverse economic and social consequences. The **Gini coefficient** or other measures of inequality are being used to examine trends in inequality.
- Income and wealth inequalities are much higher than consumption inequality. According to some estimates, Gini coefficient for consumption is 0.36 in 2011-12 in India. The Gini coefficient for consumption has shown only a small rise over a period of 10 to 12 years.
- Inequality in income for 2011-12 is high with a Gini coefficient of 0.55 while the Gini coefficient for wealth is 0.74 in 2011-12. Thus, the income Gini is 20 points higher than the consumption Gini, while the wealth Gini is nearly 40 points higher than the consumption Gini in India.

It is important to supplement expenditure-based poverty estimates with other indicators of living standards, relating for instance to nutrition, health, education and the quality of the environment.

WAY FORWARD

The various non-income indicators of poverty are, in fact, reflections of inadequate income.

- Defining poverty in terms of income or — in the absence of such data — in terms of expenditure, seems more appropriate and it is this method which is followed in most countries. Of course, it can be supplemented with non-income indicators but without aggregating them into index.
- A two-fold approach is needed to ameliorate poverty.
 1. First, growth is important. Growth can help to reduce poverty in two ways. As growth occurs, it does affect all sections of the society. However, the extent to which the bottom deciles of the population will benefit will depend upon how fast and inclusive the growth is, and thus, composition of growth also matters.
 2. A strong growth also increases the resources available to the public authorities and this will enable them to increase the social sector expenditures. It is, however, obvious that the very fact that the poverty ratio is still high means that growth by itself will not be adequate to reduce poverty. It is necessary to launch specific programmes which work towards directly helping poorer groups and vulnerable sections.

TRAIN 18

It is India's first engine-less semi-high speed train, rolled out recently by Chennai based Integral Coach Factory (ICF).

HIGHLIGHTS

- It has been designed to maximum operating speed of 160 kmph.
- It will eventually replace the Shatabdi Express for inter-city travel and it will cut travel time by 15% compared to Shatabdi.
- This fully air-conditioned train is nicknamed "The NextGen Shatabdi".
- It is driven by a self-propulsion module and it is the first long-distance train without separate locomotive (engine).
- The Shatabdi trains were introduced in 1988 and are presently running on over 20 routes connecting metros with other important cities.

WHO REPORT ON CHILD HEALTH

World Health Organisation has recently released report on "Air Pollution and Child Health".

The report is being launched on the eve of WHO's first ever Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health in Geneva.

HIGHLIGHTS

- According to the report, every day around 93% of the world's children under the age of 15 years (1.8 billion children) breathe air that is so polluted it puts their health and development at serious risk.
- The report highlights the reason why children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of air pollution.
- One is that the children breathe more rapidly than adults and so absorb more pollutants.
- The other reason is that pollutants are often more concentrated nearer to ground level.
- It added that their developing organs and nervous system are also more susceptible to long-term damage than those of adults.
- The study found that in poorer countries, 98% of all children under five are exposed to PM2.5 above WHO guidelines.

SCO MEET ON URBAN DISASTER

India is going to host Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's meeting on Urban Disaster Handling.

- Pakistan has accepted India's invitation for the meeting.
- It involves the joint mock exercise on urban earthquake search and rescue by National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).
- It will provide an opportunity to member-countries to validate their preparedness and resilience to various disasters and making humanitarian assistance in disaster response more effective

SCO

- SCO is a Eurasian political, economic, and military organisation which was founded by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
- India and Pakistan recently become members of SCO in its 2017 meeting held at Astana, Kazakhstan.
- Observer status is given to Iran, Mongolia, Belarus, Afghanistan.
- The official working languages of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation are Chinese and Russian.
- The Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), headquartered in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, is a permanent organ of the SCO.
- It serves to promote cooperation of member states against terrorism, separatism and extremism.

CURRENCY SWAP AGREEMENT

India and Japan agreed to enter in to currency swap arrangement of \$75 billion.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Currency swap arrangement means one country exchanges its national currency for that of another or even a third currency.
- Under this arrangement, India can acquire dollars from Japan in exchange for rupees.
- So, India can acquire yen or dollars from Japan upto \$75 billion in exchange for rupees under a fixed exchange rate.
- This exchange has to be reversed after an agreed period. Conversely, Japan can also seek dollars from India in exchange for yen.
- This facility will serve as a line of defence for our country's foreign exchange reserve.

ADVANTAGES

- Short –term liquidity mismatches can be met quickly.
- It will help stabilize the rupee, which has witnessed the steepest fall in recent years.
- It improves market sentiment, curbs speculative pressure on the rupee.

BHARAT STAGE IV VEHICLES BAN

Supreme Court ordered a complete ban on the sale and registration of Bharat Stage IV (BS-IV) vehicles in the country from April 1, 2020.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The manufacturers were allowed to manufacture BS-IV vehicles till March 31, 2020. So, the government proposed to give reasonable time till June 30, 2020, to sell those BS-IV vehicles.
- However, the court ordered that only BS-VI vehicles will be allowed after the April 1, 2020, at the same time BS-VI grade petrol and diesel would also come into force across the country.
- The court also said that the right to life (Article 21) includes the right of a citizen to live in a clean environment
- The court said the need of the hour was to move towards usage of cleaner fuel along with developing an engine accommodative to the fuels.

BHARAT STAGE EMISSION STANDARDS

- The Bharat Stage emission standards are standards instituted by the government to regulate the output of air pollutants from the internal combustion engines.
- It includes both emission standards for new vehicles as well as specifications for commercial petrol and diesel fuels.
- In April 1999 the Supreme Court of India ruled that all vehicles in India have to meet Euro I or India 2000 norms by 1 June.
- The Central Pollution Control Board sets timelines and standards which have to be followed by automakers.
- BS norms are based on European emission norms which are referred to in a similar manner of 'Euro 4' and 'Euro 6'.
- Implementation of the intermediate BS-V standard was originally scheduled for 2019.
- But the Centre had announced that the country would skip the BS-V norms altogether and adopt BS-VI norms by 2020.

What is the difference between BS-IV and BS-VI standards

- The main difference between the existing BS-IV and the upcoming BS-VI auto fuel norms is the presence of sulphur.
- The BS-VI fuel is estimated to bring around an 80% reduction of sulphur, from 50 parts per million to 10 ppm.
- The emission of NOx (nitrogen oxides) from diesel cars is also expected to come down by nearly 70% and 25% from cars with petrol engines.
- Also, BS VI will bring the cancer-causing particulate matter in diesel cars by a phenomenal 80%.

STATUE OF UNITY

Union government is about to inaugurate the Statue of Unity- a 182-metre statue of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel on the 143RD birth anniversary of leader.

- Statue of Unity has been inaugurated in Surat.
- The statue is being built near the Sardar Sarovar Dam in the tribal-dominated Narmada district, close to 200 kilometres from Ahmedabad.

- The statue is the world's tallest one, and the 182 metre height was decided to match the number of assembly constituencies in the state.
- The statue will be a tribute to Patel, who was the first Home minister of Independent India, and is hailed as the 'Iron Man' for his contribution to the unity and integrity of the country.

TECHNOLOGY SUMMIT

The 24th edition of this summit is going to be organised with Italy as the partner country.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The technology summit is being organised by Ministry of Science and Technology every year.
- In the past 18 years, several countries have become partner countries in this summit.
- This is the first time that Italy has been selected as partner country.
- The Summit is envisaged to serve as a wide-ranging knowledge-business partnership platform.
- It will also facilitate a comprehensive convergence of key elements of knowledge economy of India and Italy.
- Aerospace, Clean tech, Cultural Heritage, Education, Healthcare, ICT and Renewable are the seven focus sectors for this year's summit.

SUKHOI SU-30MKI

The first indigenously overhauled Sukhoi Su-30MKI supersonic aircraft was recently handed over to the Indian Air Force.

HIGHLIGHTS

- During the overhaul, the aircraft was stripped completely and rebuilt from scratch, replacing certain worn out parts/components.
- The aircraft was overhauled in country's only fighter aircraft repair depot "Ojhar" in Maharashtra.
- Sukhoi Aircraft was developed by Russia. The license for building it was given to Indian Air Force in the past 2 decades.
- It is twin-finned, twin-jet multi-role aircraft capable of attaining speeds of Mach 2 at high altitudes.
- It can carry guns, missiles, bombs, rockets and other weaponry.

WORLD AGRICULTURE PRIZE

The prize was launched recently as a part of the Global Agriculture Leadership Summit and Agro-World 2018 in New Delhi.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The first world agriculture prize was instituted by the Non-Governmental organisation Indian Council of Food and Agriculture.
- It is going to be presented annually to an individual or institution, who played seminal role in transforming agriculture globally and saving the humanity from the curse of hunger.
- Any individual or institution, private or public organization, may apply or submit a nomination for this prize.
- **Professor M.S. Swaminathan**, founder of the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF), was awarded the first World Agriculture Prize.

DRDO's NEW MISSILE TEST RANGE

Union Environment Ministry has recently given nod to DRDO to set up its surveillance system including long range missile test range in Rutland island in South Andaman.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Rutland Island is located at a vintage location of about 200 km from the Strait of Malacca that connects Indian Ocean with South China Sea.
- As of now, long-range missile tests are being carried out from the Odisha coast and are tracked by naval vessels.
- DRDO requires a land-based test area as well to accurately track its long-range missiles, with the island in the Andamans being ideally located due to its distance from mainland.
- Now, DRDO will have to obtain environment and coastal regulation zone (CRZ) clearances before commencing the project.
- The project involves the diversion of forest area from Mahatma Gandhi Marine National Park and reserve forest within 10km of the Eco Sensitive Zone.

INTERMEDIATE-RANGE NUCLEAR FORCES TREATY

Recently, US announced that it is withdrawing from the treaty. USA Congress approval for the same is yet to be taken.

BACKGROUND

- The treaty was signed in the year 1987 between United States and Soviet Union.
- It required both countries to eliminate and permanently disown all of their nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometers.
- It did not cover sea-launched missiles.
- The treaty marked the first time the superpowers had agreed to reduce their nuclear arsenals, eliminate entire category of nuclear weapons.
- As a result of this treaty, superpowers destroyed a total of 2,692 short, medium and intermediate-range missiles by the treaty's implementation deadline of June 1, 1991.
- In 2014, United States has alleged that Russia violated the treaty and it has deployed the non-compliant missile.

IMPRESS SCHEME

Impactful Policy Research in Social Science (IMPRESS) has been launched by the Ministry of Human Resource and Development.

HIGHLIGHTS

- It aims to promote policy research in social science.
- The objective is to identify and fund research proposals in social sciences with maximum impact on the governance and society.
- It will provide an opportunity to researchers from all universities (Central and State), private institutions with 12(B) status conferred by UGC.
- Under this, 1,500 research projects will be awarded for two years to support social science research in the higher educational institutions.
- The Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) has been entrusted with the task of implementing and monitoring the scheme.
- Some of the identified domains under the scheme are,
 1. State and democracy,
 2. Urban transformation,
 3. Media culture and society,
 4. Employment skills and rural transformation,
 5. Governance innovation and public policy, innovation,
 6. Agriculture and rural development,
 7. Social media and society,
 8. Politics law and economics.
- Each project under the scheme will conclude in 3 years.

ASIAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION REPORT 2018

Asian Economic Integration Report 2018 was recently released by the Asian Development Bank.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The report has highlighted that most of the international migrants in 2017 were from India, followed by China and Bangladesh.
- The report further said as many as one third of international migrants were from Asia in 2017.
- According to the report, Asia continued as the largest source of international migrants globally although the number of Asian migrants headed to regional destinations declined slightly.
- According to UN recommendations, International migrants are those persons who have spent at least one year of their lives in a country other than the one in which they live at the time the data are gathered.

MAMMAL OF INDIA (MaOI)

- MaOI is a part of Biodiversity Atlas (India project), which is an initiative of National Centre for Biological Sciences.
- It is an online, peer- reviewed, freely-accessible portal.
- It provides an opportunity to any person to upload geotagged photographic observations about mammals with information on habitat age of the observed individual.

INTERNATIONAL ARYA MAHASAMMELAN

The global convention of the Arya Samaj, the International Arya Mahasammelan 2018 was recently inaugurated by the President of India in New Delhi.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The convention was started in 2006 and this year convention is the 11th such mahasammelan.
- It aims to spread a message of human welfare originating from the Vedas, promote universal brotherhood and ensure safeguarding of social morals.
- The Arya Samaj declared representatives from 32 countries across Asia, Africa, Europe and North America will attend this global convention.

ARYA SAMAJ

- Arya Samaj was formed in the year 1875 by Swami Dayananda Saraswati.
- It emphasized on the liberation of the Hindu society.
- It believes in infallibility of Vedas. Dayananda Saraswati gave the slogan "Go back to the Vedas" to revive the true Vedic religion.
- It advocated widow remarriage, female education and equal status for women in the society.
- It strongly opposed idol worship, ritualism, practice of animal-sacrifice, the concept of polytheism, the idea of heaven and hell and fatalism.

EXTRADITION TREATY & ARRANGEMENT

- An extradition treaty is a mutually agreed text signed and ratified by two Governments.
- The arrangement is made in the absence of an extradition treaty on the assurance of reciprocity including under an international convention.
- In the arrangement, two countries consider any international convention as the legal basis for extradition in respect of any offence to which the convention applies.
- It does not cover all offences.
- For e.g India has signed extradition arrangement with Italy.
- India and Italy are both States Parties to the 1988 UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances.

- This Convention has been notified under the Extradition Act by the Government of India. Thus, the legal basis for extradition will be based on this convention.

INTERNATIONAL UDAN

International UDAN, a new international air connectivity scheme is an extension of the domestic UDAN scheme.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Domestic UDAN seeks to boost air connectivity by linking up un-served and under-served airports in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities with the big cities.
- This is done by offering cheap tickets to passengers and the Central and State governments paying a subsidy to the airlines to enable them to offer cheap tickets.
- Under International UDAN, the plan is to connect India's smaller cities directly to some key foreign destinations in the neighbourhood.
- The scheme seeks to make use of the open skies policy that India has with other Asian countries that allows direct and unlimited flights to and from these nations to 18 Indian destinations.
- Unlike in domestic UDAN where both the Centre and the State government share the subsidy, it is only the State government that will provide the financial support for flights under international UDAN.
- Like the domestic UDAN, the financial support and flying exclusivity on the route will be for three years.
- Only Indian carriers can participate in the international UDAN scheme, and only aircraft with capacity of 70 seats or more can fly the foreign routes.

INDIA'S LONGEST RIVER BRIDGE

Union Government has recently announced that India's longest river bridge across the River Brahmaputra is going to be commenced soon.

HIGHLIGHTS

- It will run between Dhubri in Assam and Phulbari in Meghalaya, which is close to the Bangladesh border.
- At 19.3 km, the new bridge will be twice as long as the Dhola-Sadiya bridge, which at present, is the longest in the country.
- The new bridge is likely to be completed by the year 2026-27.
- It is going to be funded by Japanese funding agency JICA.
- The 6.2 km long bridge in Arunachal Pradesh, over the river Dibang, was opened this year. Currently, it is the second longest in the country.

WORLD'S LONGEST SEA BRIDGE

The world's longest sea bridge was recently inaugurated by China after 9 years of construction.

- It is a 55-kilometre stretch that connects Hong Kong and Macau to Zhuhai in the Mainland China.
- It is part of China's continued effort to drag the autonomous regions of Hong Kong and Macau closer to its orbit.
- Though the bridge aims to bring the autonomous regions closer to mainland China, it will be accessible only to a select few.

SIGNATURE BRIDGE

The Signature Bridge is constructed over the Yamuna river, meant to link north and northeast Delhi with Ghaziabad.

- It is 675 metres long and has taken nine years to complete with a budget of over Rs. 6 million.
- It was first approved by the Delhi cabinet in 2007 and has missed five deadlines, the first being in 2010.

FUSION ENERGY CONFERENCE

The 27th edition of fusion energy conference was recently organised in Gandhinagar.

- It is organised by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and hosted by the Department of Atomic Energy and Gandhinagar-based Institute of Plasma Research.
- It aims to provide a forum for the discussion of technology issues that are of direct relevance to the use of nuclear fusion as a source of energy.
- Innovative concepts on using nuclear fusion as a source of energy are discussed in this conference.

C-FLOWS

C-FLOWS (Chennai Flood Warning System) is developed by National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR) and IIT Madras.

- It is a flood warning system customised for use in Chennai and soon going to be developed for other cities.
- It can predict flooding due to heavy rainfall, sea-level rise and increase in water levels of the rivers that traverse the city.
- Data from IMD, NCMRWF, INCOIS and Tamil Nadu State government are brought together to observe the situation in real time.

BAISHUI GLACIER

The glacier is in China and it is one of the world's fastest melting glaciers.

- It is located in the Third Pole of the Earth, a region in Central Asia with the world's third largest store of ice after Antarctica and Greenland.
- Third Pole glaciers are vital to billions of people from Vietnam to Afghanistan.
- Asia's 10 largest rivers, including the Yangtze, Yellow, Mekong, and Ganges are fed by seasonal melting third pole glaciers.
- The melting of this glacier attracts large number of tourists.
- Scientists have already warned that the effects of glacier melting on water resources are gradually becoming increasingly serious for China.

MARIGOLD – COLOUR OF SACRIFICE

Marigold flower is chosen as the symbol of remembrance for Indian soldiers martyred in World War I.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The world marks the centenary of the end of the First World War on November 11.
- The United Service Institution of India (USI) and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) have launched 'India Remembers' project.
- It aims to project and to remember, honour and commemorate the valour and sacrifice of personnel of the Indian Armed Forces in conflicts, both before and after independence.
- It proposes that the Marigold flower join the poppy as a new Indian symbol of remembrance.
- After the WW-I, poppy was adopted as the symbol of remembrance as it grew widely in the Flanders fields in Europe.
- In India, the India Gate was built as the focal point to the Remembrance with the names of over 72,000 soldiers inscribed over it.
- The government and the Army have to formally adopt the marigold to make it an official effort.

ARTIFICIAL MOON: CHINA

A private institute to launch an "artificial moon" over the city of Chengdu, in Sichuan province, by 2020. The objective is to provide an alternative means of street lighting and save on electricity.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The artificial moon would be a mirror orbiting Chengdu at a height of 500 km. It would reflect the sun's light at night, and supplement street lighting in Chengdu, which has a population of 1.6 million.
- The artificial moon's brightness will be around eight times that of the moon.
- The moon would illuminate an area of diameter between 10-80 km.

CHALLENGES

- At an altitude as low as 500 km, and considering a diameter small enough to be economically viable, accuracy is key.
- Missing the angle of reflection by even a few degrees would miss Chengdu by miles.

BACKGROUND

The idea to have a satellite reflect light at night isn't new. In 1993, Russia sent up Znamya 2, a plastic mirror with a diameter of 65 ft. It managed to reflect a narrow beam of light, and astronauts on the then space station Mir reportedly filmed a patch of light on the surface.

The two-and-a-half-mile-wide beam travelled for about eight minutes across part of the Atlantic Ocean and then across Europe, including Russia. Six years later, Russia launched Znamya 2.5, which was meant to be a larger mirror, but it did not deploy properly. The idea of sending up a giant mirror in the sky failed.

LIVING PLANET REPORT 2018

The Living Planet Report 2018 is the twelfth edition of the report and provides the scientific evidence to what nature has been telling us repeatedly: unsustainable human activity is pushing the planet's natural systems that support life on Earth to the edge.

The Living Planet Report, WWF's flagship publication released every two years, is a comprehensive study of trends in global biodiversity and the health of the planet.

Through multiple indicators including the Living Planet Index (LPI), provided by the Zoological Society of London (ZSL), the report shows us the urgent need for a new global deal for nature and people with clear, ambitious goals, targets and metrics, to reverse the devastating trend of biodiversity loss currently impacting the Earth.

HIGHLIGHTS

- From 1970 to 2014, 60% of all animals with a backbone — fish, birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals — were wiped out by human appetites and activity.
- According to WWF's "Living Planet" report, based on a survey of more than 4,000 species spread over 16,700 populations scattered across the globe.
- For freshwater fauna, the decline in population over the 44 years monitored was a staggering 80%. Regionally, Latin America was hit hardest, seeing a nearly 90% loss of wildlife over the same period.
- Depending on which of Earth's lifeforms are included, the current rate of species loss is 100 to 1,000 times higher than only a few hundred years ago, when people began to alter Earth's chemistry and crowd other creatures out of existence.
- Measured by weight, or biomass, wild animals today only account for 4% of mammals on Earth, with humans (36%) and livestock (60%) making up the rest.
- Back-to-back marine heatwaves have already wiped out up to half of the globe's shallow-water reefs, which support a quarter of all marine life.
- Nearly 20% of the Amazon rainforest, the world's largest, has disappeared in five decades. Tropical deforestation continues unabated, mainly to make way for soy beans, palm oil and cattle.

- Since 1950, our species has extracted 6 billion tonnes of fish, crustaceans, clams, squids and other edible sea creatures. Despite the deployment of increasingly sophisticated fishing technologies, global catches — 80% by industrial fleets — peaked in 1996 and have been declining since.
- Climate change and pollution have killed off half of the world's shallow water coral reefs, which support more than a quarter of marine life. Even if humanity manages to cap global warming at 1.5°C — which many scientists doubt is possible — coral mortality will likely be 70 to 90%.
- Coastal mangrove forests, which protect against storm surges made worse by rising seas, have also declined by up to half over the last 50 years.

WORLD WILDLIFE FUND FOR NATURE (WWF)

- It is an international non-governmental organisation founded in
- It works in the field of the wilderness preservation, and the reduction of the human impact on the environment.
- It has its Headquarters in Switzerland.
- Other notable global environmental organisations are the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), Greenpeace and the Friends of the Earth.
- Earth Hour is a movement organized by WWF annually to turn off non-essential lights for 1 hour on a space day.

WILDLIFE PROTECTION ACT, 1972

- It is an Act of Parliament of India enacted for protection of plants and animal species.
- It extends to whole of India except Jammu & Kashmir.
- It has 6 schedules which give varying degree of protection.
- Various other Acts like Air Act (1981), Environment Protection Act (1986), Biological Diversity Act (2002), National Green Tribunal Act (2010), etc have been enacted in subsequent years in India which aim at protecting the overall environment.

GLOBAL SOIL BIODIVERSITY ATLAS

The Atlas is prepared by World Wide Fund for Nature. The findings under this are part of the bi-annual Living Planet Report 2018.

- It indicates risk index which takes in to account, ***threats from loss of above-ground diversity, pollution and nutrient over-loading, over-grazing, intensive agriculture, fire, soil erosion, desertification and climate change.***
- The two key drivers of biodiversity loss were the over exploitation of natural resources and agriculture.
- The risk index shows India among countries whose soil biodiversity faces the highest level of risk.
- The report highlighted that, while India's per capita ecological footprint was less than 1.75 hectares/person (which is in the lowest band, among countries surveyed) its high population made it vulnerable to an ecological crisis.
- The other countries which are placed along with India - Pakistan, China, several countries in Africa and Europe, and most of North America.

INS TARANGINI

The sail training ship of Indian Navy, INS Tarangini based at Kochi, has returned after a seven month long sailing across the world to a grand reception at naval base, Kochi.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Voyage named "Lokayan 18" was flagged off on 10 Apr 18 from Kochi. During the voyage, the ship travelled across 15 ports in 13 countries.
- The ship sailed across the Arabian Sea, Red Sea, Suez Canal, Mediterranean Sea, Strait of Gibraltar, North Atlantic Ocean, Bay of Biscay, English Channel and North Sea, right up to Norway.

VIGILANCE AWARENESS WEEK

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare will observe the Vigilance Awareness Week from 29th October to 3rd November, 2018 as per the directions of Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), Government of India.

The theme of the vigilance awareness this year is "**Eradicate Corruption- Make a New India.**"

BACKGROUND

The Central Vigilance Commission aims to promote integrity, transparency and accountability in public life. As part of its efforts to promote probity in public life and to achieve a corruption free society, CVC observes Vigilance Awareness Week every year. The observation of Vigilance Awareness Week creates greater awareness among public and encourages all the stakeholders to collectively participate in prevention of and fight against Corruption.

CENTRAL VIGILANCE COMMISSION

- It is the apex vigilance institution. It was created via executive resolution (based on the recommendations of Santhanam committee) in 1964 but was conferred with statutory status in 2003.
- It submits its report to the President of India.
- Presently, the body consists of central vigilance commissioner along with 2 vigilance commissioners.
- They are appointed by the President of India on the recommendations of a committee consisting of Prime Minister, Union Home Minister and Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha (if there is no LoP then the leader of the single largest Opposition party in the Lok Sabha).
- Their term is 4 years or 65 years, whichever is earlier.
- The Central Vigilance Commissioner or any Vigilance Commissioner can be removed from his office only by order of the President on the ground of proved misbehavior or incapacity after the Supreme Court, on a reference made to it by the President, has, on inquiry, reported that the Central Vigilance Commissioner or any Vigilance Commissioner, as the case may be, ought to be removed.

NAMAMI GANGE PROGRAMME

The Executive Committee (EC) of the National Mission for Clean Ganga has approved 12 projects worth Rs. 929 Crore under the Namami Gange programme in its 16th meeting held recently.

BACKGROUND

- Namami Gange programme was launched as a mission to achieve the target of cleaning river Ganga in an effective manner with the unceasing involvement of all stakeholders, especially five major Ganga basin States – Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Bihar and West Bengal.
- The programme envisages: River Surface Cleaning, Sewerage Treatment Infrastructure, River Front Development, Bio-Diversity, Afforestation and Public Awareness.
- The program would be implemented by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), and its state counterpart organizations i.e., State Program Management Groups (SPMGs).
- In order to improve implementation, a three-tier mechanism has been proposed for project monitoring comprising of a) High level task force chaired by Cabinet Secretary assisted by NMCG at national level, b) State level committee chaired by Chief Secretary assisted by SPMG at state level and c) District level committee chaired by the District Magistrate.
- The program emphasizes on improved coordination mechanisms between various Ministries/Agencies of Central and State governments.

CCTNS

Conference on "CCTNS–Good practices and success Stories" is being held in New Delhi.

CCTNS

- The Crime and Criminal Tracking Networks and Systems is an Indian government project for web-based policing.
- It was conceived as a response to the Mumbai attacks of 2008 and approved in 2009.
- It aims at creating a comprehensive and integrated system for effective policing through e-Governance.
- The system is already in operation in many states but with a limited coverage.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The portal is part of the Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) that aims to integrate the CCTNS project with a larger database.
- It aims at integrating various organs of the criminal justice system with the CCTNS database.
- This include the police, courts, prisons, forensic laboratories, juvenile homes, etc.
- It facilitates a pan-India search of crime and criminal records of individuals through a national database.
- It offers 11 kinds of search and 44 types of reports.
- Also, it will provide for the citizens to register FIRs online and also to register complaints against erring police officials.
- It gives them access to seven public delivery services which include among many -
 1. Person/address verification of employees, tenants and servants.
 2. Permission for hosting public events.
 3. Reporting lost and found articles and vehicle theft.
 4. The portal has a scope of extending its domain further to the databases like vehicle registrations as well.

WHO'S 1ST GLOBAL CONFERENCE ON AIR POLLUTION & HEALTH

The first Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health will be held at WHO Headquarters in Geneva.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The conference is being held in collaboration with UN Environment, World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the Secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Climate and Clean Air Coalition to Reduce Short-Lived Climate Pollutants (CCAC) and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).
- Participants will include Ministers of Health and Environment and other national government representatives; representatives of intergovernmental agencies, health professionals, other sectors (e.g. transport, energy, etc.), as well as from research, academia and civil society.
- The conference responds to a World Health Assembly mandate to combat one of the world's most significant causes of premature death, causing some 7 million deaths annually. Air pollution in most cities exceeds recommended WHO Air Quality levels and household air pollution is a leading killer in poor rural and urban homes.
- Up to 1/3 of deaths from stroke, lung cancer and heart disease are due to air pollution.

KRISHI KUMBH-2018

The government of Uttar Pradesh in association with the Government of India is organizing a mega Agriculture Expo called "Krishi Kumbh-2018".

HIGHLIGHTS

- Krishi Kumbh-2018 would comprise of the National level exhibition, technical sessions around the theme of doubling farmers income, Business Meet, and host of other engaging activities.
- The primary objective of Krishi Kumbh 2018 is to provide a common platform to farmers, farmers group, technical experts and entrepreneurs for seamless exchange of knowledge regarding agriculture production food processing and marketing, agriculture mechanization, agro-food processing, high value crops, input and technology management in agriculture etc.

- As Uttar Pradesh is the state with the largest number of farm holdings and largest numbers of farmers, this event offers a great opportunity for showcasing their work to the stakeholders in this field.
- The event is planned to project the state's agriculture potential on one hand and provide a platform for interaction among stakeholders on the other hand.

UN HUMAN RIGHT PRIZE

UN names Human Rights Prize winners for 2018. Asma Jahangir, Rebeca Gyumi, Joenia Wapichana and Front Line Defenders are honoured by the UN for promoting human rights.

The 2018 award ceremony will take place on December 10 on World Human Rights Day in New York.

UN HUMAN RIGHT PRIZE

- The United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights is an honorary award given for outstanding achievement in human rights.
- Prize was established by the UN General Assembly in 1966 and was awarded for the first time on December 10, 1968, on the twentieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- The Prize is an opportunity not only to give public recognition to the achievements of the recipients themselves, but also to send a clear message to human rights defenders the world over that the international community is grateful for, and supports, their tireless efforts to promote all human rights for all.

INDIA WILL BE 3RD LARGEST AVIATION MARKET GLOBALLY

In its latest 20-year forecast for the aviation industry, the International Air Transport Association (IATA) says that India will be the third largest aviation market globally a year sooner than was earlier predicted. It is now expected to be among the top three countries by 2024 from its current seventh position.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Air passenger numbers worldwide could double to 8.2 billion in 2037. The biggest contribution in this growth will come from the Asia-Pacific region, which will account for half the total number of new passengers over the next 20 years.
- While China will climb up one spot to displace US as the world's largest aviation market in the mid-2020s, India will take the third place by surpassing the U.K. around 2024.
- By 2037, India is expected to add 414 million passengers to its existing 572 million passengers.
- In fact, the Asia-Pacific region is expected to see the fastest growth at the rate of 4.8%, followed by Africa (4.6%) and west Asia (4.4%).
- The other south-east Asian countries predicted to grow rapidly include Indonesia, likely to be the fourth largest by 2030 from its current ranking of 10th largest aviation market. Thailand, too, is expected to enter the top 10 markets in 2030.

IATA

- The International Air Transport Association (IATA) is the trade association for the world's airlines, representing some 280 airlines or 83% of total air traffic.
- Formed in April 1945, it is the successor to the International Air Traffic Association, which was formed in 1919.
- IATA supports airline activity and helps formulate industry policy and standards. It also provides consulting and training services in many areas crucial to aviation.
- It is headquartered in Montreal, Quebec, Canada with Executive Offices in Geneva, Switzerland.

INDIA-BANGLADESH

India and Bangladesh have signed several agreements for enhancing inland and coastal waterways connectivity between the two countries for trade and cruise movements. These agreements will facilitate easier movement of goods and passengers between the two countries, giving an impetus to trade and tourism.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The two countries have signed an agreement to use Chattogram and Mongla Ports in Bangladesh for movement of goods to and from India. A Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) has also been signed for movement of passenger and cruise services.
- An addendum to 'Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade' (PIWTT) between India and Bangladesh has been signed for inclusion of Dhubrin India and Pangaonin Bangladesh as new Ports of Call.
- The two sides have also agreed to consider inclusion of Rupnarayanriver (National Waterway-86) from Geonkhali to Kolaghat in the protocol route and to declare Kolaghatin West Bengal as new Port of Call.
- Both sides agreed to declare Badarpur on river Barak (NW 16) as an Extended Port of Call of Karimganj in Assam and Ghorasal of Ashuganj in Bangladesh on a reciprocal basis.
- Both sides have also agreed for development of Jogighopa as a hub/trans-shipment terminal for movement of cargo to Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Bhutan and notifying Munsiganj River terminal by Bangladesh Customs for routing third party Exim cargo through Kolkata Port.

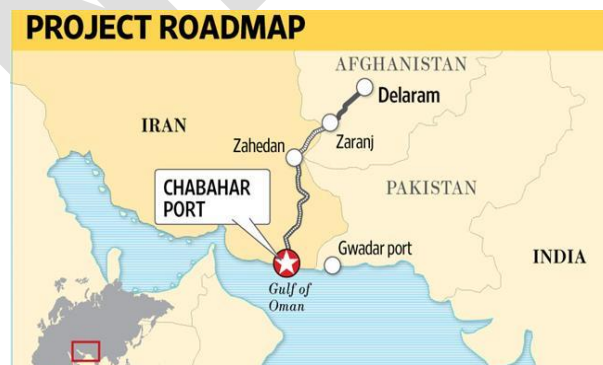
ADVANTAGES

- The new arrangement will facilitate the movement of fly ash, cement, construction materials from India to Bangladesh through IWT on Rupnarayan river.
- The North Eastern states would get connected to directly to the ports of Kolkata and Haldia in India and Mongla in Bangladesh through waterways which would facilitate movement EXIM cargo and would also reduce the logistic costs.
- The reconstruction and opening up of Jangipur navigational lock on river Bhagirathi subject to the provisions of the Treaty between India and Bangladesh on Sharing of Ganga Waters at Farakka,1996. This move has the potential to reduce the distance to Assam by more than 450 kms on the protocol routes.

TRILATERAL MEET ON CHABAHAH PORT

India, Afghanistan and Iran recently held their first trilateral meeting on Chabahar port project during which they reviewed its implementation. The meeting assumes significance as the strategically-located port on the energy-rich Iran's southern coast was coming under the ambit of US sanctions on Tehran.

The meeting decided to constitute a follow-up committee that would hold its first meeting within two months in Chabahar port. The committee would discuss and aim to finalise protocol to harmonise transit, roads, customs and consular matters for making the route attractive and decrease logistic costs.

CHABAHAH PORT

- It is located on the Makran coast, Chabahar in southeastern Iran.
- Its location lies in the Gulf of Oman.
- This coast is a relatively underdeveloped free trade and industrial zone, especially when compared to the sprawling port of Bandar Abbas further west. Also, it is the only Iranian port with direct access to the ocean.

BENEFIT TO INDIA

- India believes the port is critical to its interests and wants to develop it as a counter to Pakistan's Gwadar port which was built with Chinese assistance
- The port will allow India to bypass Pakistan to transport goods to Afghanistan and Central Asia using a sea-land route
- Chabahar Port lies in the Persian Gulf in Iran and will help India in expanding its maritime commerce in the region
- It also provides opportunities to Indian companies to penetrate and enhance their footprint in the region
- It is located 76 nautical miles (less than 150km) west of the Pakistani port of Gwadar, being developed by China. This makes it ideal for keeping track of Chinese or Pakistani military activity based out of Gwadar
- The port will cut transport costs/time for Indian goods by a third
- From Chabahar, the existing Iranian road network can link up to Zaranj in Afghanistan, about 883 kms from the port. The Zaranj-Delaram road constructed by India in 2009 can give access to Afghanistan's Garland Highway, setting up road access to four major cities in Afghanistan — Herat, Kandahar, Kabul and Mazar-e-Sharif

INSTC: It will boost India's access to Iran, the key gateway to the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) that has sea, rail and road routes between India, Russia, Iran, Europe and Central Asia. It can significantly boost import of iron ore, sugar and rice to India from Afghanistan. It can also help to reduce import cost of oil to India.

CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) BILL 2016

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill is gaining momentum yet again as the Assam Government has refused the proposed rally of organisations from West Bengal in support of the Bill.

CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) BILL 2016

- The Citizenship Amendment Bill was proposed in Lok Sabha on July 19, amending the Citizenship Act of 1955.
- If this Bill is passed in Parliament, illegal migrants from certain minority communities coming from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan will then be eligible for Indian citizenship.
- In short, illegal migrants belonging to the Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian religious communities from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan would not be imprisoned or deported.
- Moreover, these citizens gain permanent citizenship after six years of residency in India instead of 11 years — as mentioned in the Citizenship Act (1955).
- The registration of Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cardholders may get cancelled if they violate any law.

CITIZENSHIP ACT 1955

- Under Article 9 of the Indian Constitution, a person who voluntarily acquires citizenship of any other country is no longer an Indian citizen.
- Citizenship by descent: Persons born outside India on or after January 26, 1950, but before December 10, 1992, are citizens of India by descent if their father was a citizen of India at the time of their birth.
- From December 3, 2004, onwards, persons born outside of India shall not be considered citizens of India unless their birth is registered at an Indian consulate within one year of the date of birth.
- In Section 8 of the Citizenship Act 1955, if an adult makes a declaration of renunciation of Indian citizenship, he loses Indian citizenship.
- According to the Citizenship Act (1955), an illegal immigrant is defined as a person who enters India without a valid passport or stays in the country after the expiry of the visa permit. Also, the immigrant who uses false documents for the immigration process.
- In India, the Citizenship Act, 1955 prescribes five ways of acquiring citizenship:
 1. Birth.

2. Descent.
3. Registration.
4. Naturalization.
5. Incorporation of the territory.

ASSAM NRC

- The National Register of Citizens (NRC) is a list that contains names of Indian citizens of Assam. It was last prepared after Census in 1951.
- Assam, which had faced an influx of people from Bangladesh since the early 20th century, is the only state having an NRC.
- The Assam government on July 30, 2018 released the second and final draft of the state's National Register of Citizens (NRC). The draft includes the names of Indian citizens who have been residing in Assam before March 25, 1971.

SITTWE PORT

India and Myanmar have signed an important MoU for the appointment of a private Port Operator for the Operation and Maintenance of Sittwe Port, Paletwa Inland Water Terminal and associated facilities included in the Kaladan Multi Model Transit Transport Project in implementation of India's Act East Policy.

SITTWE PORT



- Sittwe Port is a deep water port constructed by India in 2016 at Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State in Myanmar, on the Bay of Bengal.
- Situated at the mouth of the Kaladan River, the USD 120 Million port is being financed by India as a part of the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, a collaboration between India and Myanmar.
- The project is aimed at developing transport infrastructure in southwestern Myanmar and north-eastern India.

KALADAN PROJECT

- The project is aimed to connect the eastern Indian seaport of Kolkata with Sittwe seaport in Rakhine State, Myanmar by sea.
- The project includes a waterway component of 158 km on Kaladan River from Sittwe to Paletwa in Myanmar and a road component of 109 km from Paletwa to Zorinpui along the India-Myanmar border in Mizoram.

- Originally, the project was scheduled to be completed by 2014, but is expected to be operational only by 2019-2020.
- All components of the project, including Sittwe port and power, river dredging, Paletwa jetty, have been completed, except the under construction Zorinpui-Paletwaa road.
- This project will reduce distance from Kolkata to Sittwe by approximately 1328 km and will reduce the need to transport good through the narrow Siliguri corridor, also known as Chicken's Neck.

APP "CHAI SAHAY"

Tea Board of India is planning to launch an app aimed at guiding small growers, whose share in total tea production is increasing. The proposed name of the app is Chai Sahay (tea help).

HIGHLIGHTS

- The mobile platform would have user-interface facilities with the targeted user groups (the small tea grower) and the various officials.
- It would also have information on the various activities of the board officials.
- The existing database of the STGs would be incorporated in the app, which would also give information on their registration process.
- There would be advisories on application of farm inputs and pesticide use. Small growers can also post queries for advice on pest control.

GAMING GARAGE

Andhra Pradesh government has proposed to set up a 'Gaming Garage' to generate employment and encourage entrepreneurs and game developers in view of its growing importance. The 'Gaming Garage' will be launched in Vijayawada very soon.

The gaming became an industry with crores of rupees turnover with the rapid development of computers and smartphone technologies. The Cabinet in April gave its nod to animations and visual effects, gaming and comics policy to attract the best from the sector and an investment of about 6,400 crores by 2020.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Companies such as the Unity Technologies, Denmark/San Francisco would provide the software. The Kajaani University of Applied Sciences (KAMK) of Finland would be knowledge/operational partner.
- Any creative thinker could walk into the Garage to develop a game of choice.
- The government would provide them with "the necessary software and infrastructure free of cost". It would also encourage them in commercialising their product.

THIRD POLE

Scientists conducting research in the third pole area have warned of disturbing global warming trends, and how, if they continue, they could affect the lives of 1.3 billion people. The glacier has lost 60% of its mass and shrunk 250 m since 1982.

THIRD POLE

- The Hindu Kush-Himalayan region spans an area of more than 4.3 million square kilometres in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Pakistan.
- The region stores more snow and ice than anywhere else in the world outside the polar regions, giving its name: 'The Third Pole'.
- The Third Pole contains the world's highest mountains, including all 14 peaks above 8,000 metres, is the source of 10 major rivers, and forms a formidable global ecological buffer.
- The Third Pole region has enormous socioeconomic and cultural diversity; it is home to many different ethnic communities speaking more than 600 languages and many more dialects.

- It is endowed with rich natural resources and contains all or part of four global biodiversity hotspots.
- The mountain resources provide a wide range of ecosystem services and the basis for the livelihoods to the 210 million people living in the region, as well as indirectly to the 1.3 billion people — one fifth of the world's population — living in the downstream river basins.
- More than 3 billion people benefit from the food and energy produced in these river basins that have their origin in the mountains.

CHALLENGES TO THIRD POLE

- Climate change has become a major concern in the Third Pole. Mountain systems are particularly sensitive to climate change and the Third Pole region is home to some of the people most vulnerable to these changes in the world. Changes in the river systems and their basins have impacted directly on the wellbeing of millions of people.
- The rate of warming in the Third Pole region is significantly higher than the global average, and the rate is higher at higher altitude, suggesting a greater vulnerability of the cryosphere environment to climate change. This trend is expected to continue.
- Climate change projections suggest that all areas of South Asia are likely to warm by at least 1°C by the end of the century, while in some areas the warming could be as high as 3.5-4°C. The life and livelihoods of the people in the Third Pole region is challenged due to climate change, and the stability and prosperity of the region affected by the Third Pole is at risk, which will have implications for all of Asia and for the world.

However, there is still little knowledge of this situation, and its potential implications, outside the immediate vicinity; a special effort is needed to raise awareness of the fragility of the mountain social-ecological system.

The Third Pole Environment (TPE): TPE, an international research program, was launched in 2009 and focuses on the Tibetan Plateau and surrounding mountain ranges.

27TH FUSION ENERGY CONFERENCE 2018

The 27th Fusion Energy Conference (FEC 2018) was held recently in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

HIGHLIGHTS

- It was organised by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and hosted by Department of Atomic Energy and Gandhinagar-based Institute of Plasma Research.
- The 27th IAEA Fusion Energy Conference (FEC 2018) aims to provide a forum for the discussion of key physics and technology issues as well as innovative concepts of direct relevance to the use of nuclear fusion as a source of energy.
- The scientific scope of FEC 2018 is intended to reflect the priorities of this new era in fusion energy research.
- With the participation of international organizations such as the ITER Organization and the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom), as well as the collaboration of more than forty countries and several research institutes, including those working on smaller plasma devices, it is expected that this conference will, like previous conferences in the series, serve to identify possibilities and means for continuous and effective international collaboration in this area.

IAEA

- The IAEA is the world's centre for cooperation in the nuclear field.
- It was set up as the world's "Atoms for Peace" organization in 1957 within the United Nations.
- The Agency works with its Member States and multiple partners worldwide to promote the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies.
- It seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.

- IAEA reports to both the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council.
- The IAEA has its headquarters in Vienna, Austria.
- The IAEA serves as an intergovernmental forum for scientific and technical cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear technology and nuclear power worldwide.

INTERNATIONAL THERMOUCLEAR EXPERIMENT REACTOR (ITER)

- ITER, the world's largest experimental fusion facility is in France.
- It is the most complex science project in human history, started in 2010.
- It will use hydrogen fusion, controlled by superconducting magnets, to produce massive heat energy.
- This nuclear fusion facility is an international cooperation among the European Union, Russia, the US, Japan, China, India and South Korea.
- It is the first industrial-scale fusion reactor and it will illuminate the way to produce clean, cheap, and abundant energy for millions of years.
- It will start generating a molten mass of electrically-charged gas "plasma" inside a core by 2025.

GREEN CLIMATE FUND

Green Climate Fund has approved more than \$1 billion in new investments after a meeting held recently in Bahrain.

The meeting approved 19 new projects, including a programme to protect freshwater resources in Bahrain. Environmentalists had argued the Gulf nation should pay for the project itself using money it made from its vast reserves of oil and gas.

GCF

- The Green Climate Fund (GCF) is a new global fund created to support the efforts of developing countries to respond to the challenge of climate change.
- GCF helps developing countries limit or reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and adapt to climate change.
- It seeks to promote a paradigm shift to low-emission and climate-resilient development, taking into account the needs of nations that are particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts.
- GCF is headquartered in Songdo, Republic of Korea.
- It was set up by the 194 countries who are parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2010, as part of the Convention's financial mechanism.
- It aims to deliver equal amounts of funding to mitigation and adaptation, while being guided by the Convention's principles and provisions.
- When the Paris Agreement was reached in 2015, the Green Climate Fund was given an important role in serving the agreement and supporting the goal of keeping climate change well below 2 degrees Celsius.
- GCF invests in adaptation and mitigation activities in developing countries, managing a project portfolio that is implemented by its partner organisations, known as Accredited Entities.

SHAKTI BHATT 1ST BOOK PRIZE 2018

US-based writer Sujatha Gidla has won 2018 Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize for her debut book "Ants Among Elephants: An Untouchable Family and the Making of Modern India".

- The Shakti Bhatt First Book Prize is funded by the Shakti Bhatt Foundation.
- It was set up in 2008 in memory of young writer and editor Shakti Bhatti.
- It honours first-time writers from Indian sub-continent for their outstanding work of fiction or non-fiction.
- It carries cash prize of Rs. 2 lakhs.

BARREN VOLCANO

India's live volcano in the Andaman and Nicobar islands is reported to be erupting once again in 2018. The eruptions could be linked to the recent earthquake that rocked Indonesia in Southeast Asia. The active volcano in India is Barren Island and is uninhabited, located about 140 km from Port Blair.

BARREN ISLAND (ANDAMAN ISLANDS)

- Barren Island is located in Andaman Sea, about 140 km from Port Blair.
- It is a part of Indian Union Territory of Andaman and Nicobar islands.
- Barren volcano in the region is the only confirmed active volcano in South Asia (along a chain of volcanoes from Sumatra to Myanmar)
- The oldest subaerial lava flows of the volcano are calculated to be 1.6 million years old.

VOLCANIC EXPLOSIVITY INDEX (VEI)

- It is a relative measure of the explosiveness of volcanic eruptions.
- It was devised by Chris Newhall of the United States Geological Survey.
- Explosivity value is determined by volume of products, eruption cloud height, and qualitative observations.
- The indices of VEI range from VEI 0 (non-explosive eruptions) to VEI 8 (most explosive eruptions recorded).
- The 1815 eruption of Mount Tambora (in present day Indonesia) had VEI 7. The ash erupted and dispersed around the world and lowered global temperatures. It was called as "Year without a summer" in 1816 that observed extreme weather events and harvest failures in many areas.

VOLCANO

- It is a rupture in the crust of a planetary-mass object (like Earth), that causes hot lava, volcanic ash, and gases to escape from a magma chamber below the surface.
- On Earth, volcanoes are generally found where tectonic plates (like Eurasian, Pacific, Somali, etc) diverge or converge. Examples- volcanoes occurring in mid-oceanic ridge and Ring of Fire.
- Eruption of volcanoes can be hazardous for humans and other lives living in its vicinity and volcanic ash may be a threat to aircrafts. Volcanoes can also cause
- Large volcanic eruptions inject water vapour (H₂O), Carbon Dioxide (CO₂), Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂), ash, etc into the stratosphere to heights of 16-32 km.
- A volcano is considered to be "active" if it has erupted in the last 10,000 years. Examples – Kilauea (Hawaiian Islands), Mount Etna (Italy), etc.
- Extinct volcanoes are unlikely to erupt again as the volcano no longer has a magma supply. Examples – Volcanoes on Hawaiian Emperor seamount chain in the Pacific Ocean, Shiprock in New Mexico, etc.

GLOBAL STRATEGIC PETROLEUM RESERVES

The Government of India is planning to increase its oil reserves at a time when there is immense volatility in global crude oil prices.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Government of India is planning to set up two more such caverns at Chandikhole (Odisha) and Udupi (Karnataka) as per phase II by Public-Private partnership. This will give an additional 6.5 million tons of the oil reserves equivalent to 12 days of consumption. Thus, a total of 22 days (10+12) of oil consumption will be available by ISPR.
- Crude oil from underground rock caverns (considered safest for storage of Hydrocarbons) can be supplied to refineries through pipelines and ships.

- Indian refiners also maintain crude oil storage (industrial stock) of 65 days. Thus, a total of 87 days (22 by ISPL + 65 by Indian refiners) of oil consumption will be made available in India after completion of Phase II by ISPR. This will be very close to 90 days mandate by the IEA.

GLOBAL STRATEGIC PETROLEUM RESERVE

- A strategic reserve is the reserve of a commodity that is held back from normal use by governments/ organisations/ businesses to cope with unexpected events.
- Such strategic reserves can be held for petroleum, Uranium, Helium, grains, Gold, etc.
- All members of the International Energy Agency (IEA) must have a strategic petroleum reserve equal to 90 days of the previous year's net oil imports for their respective countries. Only net-export members of the IEA are exempt under this.
- About 1 billion barrels of oil are held in strategic reserves globally.
- Global oil consumption is 0.1 billion barrels/ day. So, 4.1 billion barrels is equivalent to 41 days of production.
- USA has world's largest such reserves. Majority of the remainder reserves are held by IEA members and some non-IEA countries like China also hold large reserves.

INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY (IEA)

- IEA is a Paris-based autonomous intergovernmental organization established in the framework of ORGANISATION FOR ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT (OECD) in 1974 in the wake of the 1973 oil crisis.
- 1973 oil crisis took place between October 1973 and February 1974 as the prices of oil increased from US\$3 to US\$12 per barrel globally.
- It was influenced by oil embargo by two important oil organisations – ORGANISATION OF ARAB PETROLEUM EXPORTING COUNTRIES (OAPEC) AND ORGANISATION OF PETROLEUM EXPORTING COUNTRIES (OPEC).
- IEA responds to the physical disruptions in the supply of oil and gives statistics about the international oil market and other energy sectors.
- IEA focuses on “3Es” of effectual energy policy: energy security, economic development, and environmental protection.
- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) is an intergovernmental economic organisation with 36 members, founded in 1961 to stimulate economic progress and world trade.
- Only the OECD members can become members of the IEA. As of October 2018, IEA has 30 members states. India has joined the IEA as an association country.

STRATEGIC PETROLEUM RESERVE (INDIA)

- The Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserve (ISPR) is an emergency fuel storage maintained by INDIAN STRATEGIC PETROLEUM RESERVES LIMITED under the MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (MOP&NG).
- Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas is responsible for exploration, production, refining, distribution, marketing, import, export, and conservation of petroleum, natural gas, petroleum products and liquefied natural gas in India.
- India imports 82% of its oil needs.
- Strategic crude oil storages are at Mangalore (Karnataka), Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh) and Padur (Kerala) as per Phase I. They have fuel storage of total 5.33 MMT (Million Metric Tonnes) enough to provide 10 days of consumption.

KIIFB TO ISSUE MASALA BONDS

The Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board would issue 'masala bonds' worth Rs 5,000 crore to mobilise funds for various development works.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Rupee denominated overseas bonds are popularly known as masala bonds.
- The bonds would be listed in the London and Singapore stock exchanges, he said adding bonds worth Rs 5,000 crore would be issued in the first phase.
- The Reserve Bank of India had already given sanction for bonds worth Rs 2,647 crore.

MASALA BONDS

- 'Masala Bonds' are Indian rupee denominated bonds issued in offshore capital markets which issued to offshore investors settled in dollars and, therefore, the currency risk resides with investors.
- It is used to refer to rupee-denominated borrowings by Indian entities in overseas markets.
- The International Finance Corporation (IFC) the investment branch of the World Bank issued a 10-year, 10 billion Indian rupee bonds in November 2014 to increase foreign investment in India and mobilize international capital markets to support infrastructure development in the country.
- Masala bond was the first Indian bond to get listed in London Stock Exchange.
- IFC named it Masala bonds to give a local flavour by calling to mind Indian culture and cuisine.
- Moreover, there are popular bonds name are there in the list Dim-Sum Bond of China and Samurai Bonds of Japan, Yankee of USA and the bulldog of UK.

FACTS

- **INDIAN MOBILE CONGRESS 2018:** *India Mobile Congress is being held in New Delhi.*

Theme: *"NEW DIGITAL HORIZONS: Connect. Create. Innovate."*

The India Mobile Congress 2018, hosted by the Department of telecommunications and the Cellular Operators Association of India (COAI), is an excellent platform for policy makers, industry and regulators to engage in meaningful deliberations to drive the future direction of this important sector.

- **DRUZBA-III:** It is a joint bilateral military exercise between Pakistan and Russian special forces. The 2018 edition is being held in Pakistan. Druzhba military exercise between Russia and Pakistan was started in 2016. "Druzhba" is Russian word, which means "friendship".
- **Iron Magic 19:** It is joint military exercise between United Arab Emirates (UAE) and United States (US). The latest edition is being held in Dubai.
- **MIGINGO ISLAND:** *For over a decade, Migingo has been a source of tension between Uganda and Kenya, who have been unable to decide to whom it really belongs.* Compared to half the size of a football pitch, Migingo is a small rock Island, located in Lake Victoria which is the largest lake in Africa and the largest Tropical Lake in the whole world.
- **BILASPUR-MANALI-LEH RAILWAY LINE:** *India railways is planning to link New Delhi and Ladakh by means of a railway line that will run along the India-China Border.* The proposed Bilaspur-Manali-Leh Line will be the world's highest at 5,360 metres above mean sea level which is comparable to China's Quinghai-Tibet Railway Line at 2,000 metres.