

**CURRENT AFFAIRS**  
**1<sup>ST</sup> TO 15<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2018**

**MARINE FISHERIES-MARICULTURE IN INDIA**

***The inter-session meeting of the consultative committee of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare on "Marine Fisheries-Mariculture in India" held in Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu.***

The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare has notified the "**National Policy on Marine Fisheries, 2017**", which will guide the development of marine fisheries sector for the next 10 years.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- The government has also included a sub-component namely, '**Assistance for Deep-Sea Fishing**' **under 'Blue-Revolution'**.
- Under this scheme, traditional fishermen, their associations/organizations or self-help groups are provided with central financial assistance upto 50% of the cost of the vessels i.e. Rs 40 lakh for '**Deep-Sea Fishing Vessels**'.
- The government has decided to promote '**marine culture fisheries**' and included the sub-components of '**Mariculture**' **under 'Blue Revolution' Scheme**.
- **Open sea cage farming** is one of the eco-friendly farming activities under mariculture which is being practiced in open sea where wave action is less. The fishes that are being cultured in cages are high value fishes; hence there is a huge export demand for cage cultured fishes.
- **Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying & Fisheries (DAFD)** has formulated a document on **Mission Mariculture-2022** with the main objective of **enhancing fish production** from marine sector.
- It is proposed to promote mariculture including open sea cage culture activity in all maritime States and UTs on priority basis with the active participation of maritime States/UTs and fishers.
- Ministry of Agriculture and farmers' welfare has launched the **Krishi Kalyan Abhiyaan** from 1st June, 2018 till 31st July, 2018 so as to aid, assist and advice farmers on how to improve their farming techniques and raise their incomes.
- The **Krishi Kalyan Abhiyaan** will be undertaken in 25 villages with more than 1000 population each in Aspirational District identified in consultation with **Ministry of Rural Development** as per the directions of **NITI Aayog**.

**BACKGROUND**

Fish production in India is estimated at 11.4 million tonnes, out of which 68% is registered from inland fisheries sector and the remaining 32% from marine sector. It is expected that the indigenous fish requirement by 2020 would be 15 million tonnes as against the production of 11.4 million tonnes. This gap of 3.62 million tonnes is expected to be made up by Inland Aquaculture and also through mariculture.

**National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB)**, Hyderabad which functions under the Ministry has provided financial assistance of Rs 114.73 lakh to the Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) in 2011 for implementation of a technology upgradation project on demonstration of open sea cage farming in 14 locations along the coasts of almost all maritime states on pilot basis.

### ASIA PACIFIC TRADE AGREEMENT

***The results of 4th Round of negotiations under the Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA) (formerly Bangkok Agreement) among six countries, namely, Bangladesh, China, India, Lao PDR, Republic of Korea, and Sri Lanka, have been implemented with effect from 1st July, 2018.***

#### HIGHLIGHTS

- The 4th Round of trade negotiations were formally concluded and signed by the Ministers of the member countries during the meeting of the ***APTA Ministerial Council*** on 13th January, 2017. The decision of the Ministerial Council has now been implemented by all members with effect from 1 July 2018.
- With the implementation of the Fourth Round, the coverage of preferences of total tariff lines for each member would come of 10,677 tariff lines (up from 4,270 items at the conclusion of the Third Round) and deepen the average Margin of Preference (MoP) being provided under the agreement to 31.52%.
- The Least Develop Country (LDC) members are entitled to greater concessions on 1,249 items with an average MoP of 81% on these items under the special and differential treatment provisions of the APTA.
- India has, on its part, exchanged tariff concessions on 3142 tariff lines with all member countries and special concessions on 48 tariff lines for LDCs, with Bangladesh and Lao PDR.

### ASIA PACIFIC TRADE AGREEMENT

APTA is an initiative under the ***United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN ESCAP)*** for trade expansion through exchange of tariff concessions among developing country members of the Asia Pacific Region, in place since 1975.

APTA is a ***Preferential Trade Agreement***, under which the basket of items as well as extent of tariff concessions are enlarged during the trade negotiating rounds which are launched from time to time.

***APTA aims*** to promote economic development through the adoption of mutually beneficial trade liberalization measures that will contribute to intra-regional trade expansion and provides for economic integration through coverage of merchandise goods, services, investment and trade facilitation.

APTA is the first plurilateral agreement among the developing countries in the region to adopt common operational procedures for certification and verification of the origin of goods and it has the longest effective implementation period amongst the trade agreements in the entire Asia-Pacific. Notably, APTA is the only operational trade agreement linking China and India and other major markets such as the Republic of Korea.

### MOBILE APP "cVIGIL"

***Election Commission of India launches Mobile App "cVIGIL" to enable citizens to report on violation of election code of conduct***

#### HIGHLIGHTS

- "cVIGIL" will be operational only where elections are announced.
- The application will be made available for general use by all, right from the forthcoming Assembly elections in the States of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram and Rajasthan.

- “cVIGIL” will allow anyone in the election-bound state to report violations of Model Code of Conduct (MCC) that comes into effect from the date of announcement of elections and goes on till a day after the polls.
- By using this app, citizens can immediately report on incidents of misconduct within minutes of having witnessed them and without having to rush to the office of the returning officer to lodge a complaint.
- The vigilant citizen has to click a picture or record a video of upto two minutes’ duration of the scene of violations of the model code. The photo or video is to be uploaded on the app.
- The automated location mapping will be done by the app using the **Geographic Information System**.

### **BRU COMMUNITY**

***In a major breakthrough on repatriation of displaced Bru persons from Mizoram since 1997, an agreement has been signed by Government of India, Governments of Mizoram and Tripura and Mizoram Bru Displaced People’s Forum (MBDPF).***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- 5,407 families comprising of 32,876 persons presently in temporary camps in Tripura will repatriate to Mizoram before 30th Sept., 2018.
- Government of India will provide financial assistance for rehabilitation of Brus in Mizoram and address their issues of security, education, livelihood etc. in consultation with Governments of Mizoram and Tripura.
- A Committee under Special Secretary (Internal Security) will coordinate the implementation of this agreement.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Bru community, once spread across Mamit and Kolasib districts of Mizoram, were forced to flee their native land in 1997 after animosity between the tribe and the Mizos turned violent. Conflict between the communities began in 1995 when organisations representing Mizos — majority community in the state — demanded that Brus be stripped of their voting rights as they were not indigenous to Mizoram.

This led to rise of militant outfits among the Brus who in 1997 shot dead a Mizo forest guard. The violent backlash from Mizos to this incident forced Brus to flee to Tripura where they have been living in refugee camps in pitiable condition for close to two decades.

### **KVIC LAUNCHED KIMIS**

***The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) launched its, in-house developed, single-umbrella e-marketing system named Khadi Institution Management and Information System (KIMIS) in New Delhi.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The system can be accessed from anywhere in the country for the sale and purchase of Khadi and Village Industries products.
- This software will give real-time data of sales and will also give the updated status of stocks of khadi bhawans and godowns, allowing better planning and control of inventory of the KVIC.

- 480 Khadi institutions and showrooms are linked with this billing software and it will be useful in raising demand and supply of goods in high demand.

### KVIC

The ***Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)*** is a statutory body established by an Act of Parliament (No. 61 of 1956, as amended by act no. 12 of 1987 and Act No.10 of 2006. In April 1957, it took over the work of former All India Khadi and Village Industries Board.

### OBJECTIVES

- The social objective of providing employment.
- The economic objective of producing saleable articles.
- The wider objective of creating self-reliance amongst the poor and building up of a strong rural community spirit.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Its functions also comprise building up of a reserve of raw materials and implements for supply to producers, creation of common service facilities for processing of raw materials as semi-finished goods and provisions of facilities for marketing of KVI products apart from organisation of training of artisans engaged in these industries and encouragement of co-operative efforts amongst them.
- To promote the sale and marketing of khadi and/or products of village industries or handicrafts, the KVIC may forge linkages with established marketing agencies wherever feasible and necessary.

### INDIRA SAGAR POLAVARAM PROJECT

***Chairperson NCST Presents Special Report on “Indira Sagar Polavaram Project” Affected Tribal People to President of India.***

The report and recommendations are under Article 338A(5)(e) of the Constitution on the measures to be taken by the Government of Andhra Pradesh for the effective implementation of constitutional safeguards and other measures for the protection, welfare and socio-economic development of the Scheduled Tribes who are affected on account of Polavaram Irrigation Project, Andhra Pradesh.

### BACKGROUND

Indira sagar Polavaram an interstate project on river Godavari has been conceived as a part of recommendations of ***Godavari Water Disputes Tribunal (GWDT)***. The award identifies individual projects that can be taken up by the co-basin states of ***Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh (including Chhattisgarh), Orissa, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh (AP)*** on the main Godavari river as well as its tributaries.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Indira Sagar (Polavaram) project is located on river Godavari near Ramayyapet village of Polavaram Mandal of West Godavari district in Andhra Pradesh.
- The project is multipurpose major terminal reservoir project on river Godavari for development of Irrigation, Hydro power and drinking water facilities to East Godavari, Vishakhapatnam, West Godavari and Krishna districts of Andhra Pradesh.
- The project implements Godavari-Krishna link under Interlinking of rivers project.

- The project envisages transfer of 80TMC of surplus Godavari water to river Krishna which will be shared between AP, Karnataka and Maharashtra in proportion of 45 TMC by AP and 35 TMC by Karnataka and Maharashtra as per the decision of the GWDT award.

### **FIRST GLOBAL MOBILITY SUMMIT**

***NITI Aayog, in collaboration with various ministries and industry partners, is organising 'MOVE: Global Mobility Summit' in New Delhi on 7th and 8th September, 2018. This Summit will help drive Government's goals for vehicle electrification, renewable energy integration and job growth and also speed up India's transition to a clean energy economy.***

MOVE Summit aims to bring together and engage with key stakeholders within the rapidly transforming global mobility landscape and to evolve a public interest framework for a shared, connected, zero emission and inclusive mobility agenda for the future.

*The Summit has been organised along key 'tracks' to anchor debate and deliberations on towards preparing a collective mobility agenda. The six tracks or themes for the Summit will focus on:*

1. Asset Utilization and Services.
  2. Comprehensive Electrification.
  3. Alternative Energy.
  4. Reinventing Public Transit.
  5. Logistics and Goods Transport.
  6. Data Analytics and Mobility.
- ***Global Mobility Summit (GMS)*** Exhibition will offer a first-hand perspective on automotive solutions, upcoming trends in the logistics sector and will see participation from major global players as well as the Indian industry.
  - NITI Aayog has additionally planned a series of uniquely curated '***NITI Talks***', showcasing successful entrepreneurs from across the country to well-known movers and shakers from the field of mobility, sustainable development, climate change and multimodal transport.
  - The Summit aims to encourage synergies between indigenous industries such as Automobile Manufacturing, Information Technology, Electronics, Telecommunications and others, to integrate with global supply chains and cement India's position as a progressive, forwarding looking nation.
  - NITI Aayog has also been working towards evolving a ***National Strategy for Transforming Mobility***, in the spirit of cooperative and competitive federalism, urging all States and Union territories to formulate state-specific comprehensive strategies by constituting respective State Task Forces.

### **WIPO COPYRIGHT TREATY**

***The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal submitted by Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industry regarding accession to the WIPO Copyright Treaty and WIPO Performers and Phonograms Treaty which extends coverage of copyright to the internet and digital environment.***

### **BACKGROUND**

The approval is a step towards the objective laid in the ***National Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Policy*** adopted by the Government on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2016 which aims to get value for IPRs through

commercialization by providing guidance and support to EPR owners about commercial opportunities of e-commerce through Internet and mobile platforms.

**BENEFITS:** Meeting the demand of the copyright industries, these treaties will help India:

- To enable creative right-holders enjoy the fruit of their labour, through international copyright system that can be used to secure a return on the investment made in producing and distributing creative works.
- To facilitate international protection of domestic rights holder by providing them level-playing field in other countries as India already extends protection to foreign works through the International Copyright order and these treaties will enable Indian right holders to get reciprocal protection abroad.
- To instil confidence and distribute creative works in digital environment with return on investment.
- To spur business growth and contribute to the development of a vibrant creative economy and cultural landscape.

### **COPYRIGHT ACT, 1957**

The Copyright Act, 1957 was amended in 2012 to bring it in conformity, with WCT and WPPT, includes amendment in definition of "**Communication to the public**" to make it applicable to digital environment (Section 2(ff)) as also introduced provisions related to **Technological Protection Measures (Section 65A) & Rights Management Information (Section 65B); Moral rights of performers (Section 38B); Exclusive rights of the performers (Section 38A); safe harbour provisions over electronic medium (Section 52 (1) (b) and (c)).**

### **WIPO COPYRIGHT TREATY**

WIPO Copyright Treaty came in force on March 6, 2002 and has been adopted by 96 contracting parties till date and is A Special agreement under **Berne Convention (for protection of literary and artistic works)**. It has provisions to extend the protection of copyrights contained therein to the digital environment. Further it recognises the rights specific to digital environment, of making work available, to address "on-demand" and other interactive modes of access.

### **WIPO PERFORMANCES & PHONOGRAMS TREATY**

WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty came in force on May 20, 2002 and has 96 contracting parties as its members. WPPT deals with rights of two kinds of beneficiaries, particularly in digital environment –

- (i) Performers (actors, singers, musicians etc.)
- (ii) Producers of Phonograms (Sound recordings).

The treaty empowers right owners in the negotiations with new digital platforms and distributors. It recognizes moral rights of the performers for the first time & provides exclusive economic rights to them.

*Both the treaties provide framework for creators and right owners to use technical tools to protect their works and safeguard information about their use i.e. **Protection of Technological Protection Measures (TPMs) and Rights Management Information (RMI)**.*

## RECAPITALISATION OF REGIONAL RURAL BANKS

*The Union Cabinet approved the extension of the scheme of recapitalization of Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) for the next three years i.e. upto 2019-20.*

This will enable the RRBs to maintain the minimum prescribed **Capital to Risk Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) of 9 per cent.**

### IMPACT

A strong capital structure and minimum required level of CRAR will ensure financial stability of RRBs which will enable them to play a greater role in financial inclusion and meeting the credit requirements of rural areas.

### BANK RECAPITALISATION

Bank recapitalisation means recapitalising banks with new capital to improve their balance sheet. The government, using different instruments, infuses capital into banks undergoing credit crunch. Capital is the money invested by shareholders in the business. Since the government is the biggest shareholder in public sector banks, the responsibility of infusing capital majorly lies with the government.

The recapitalisation plan comes into action when banks get caught in a situation where their liabilities are comparatively higher than their assets. The liquidity with banks is a liability as it is the money deposited by customers, which needs to be paid sooner or later. Due to this their balance-sheet weakens and banks find it difficult to raise capital from the open market. The government, which is also the biggest shareholder, can infuse capital in banks by either buying new shares or by issuing bonds.

### RECAPITALISATION BOND

- A government bond is an instrument to raise money from the market with a promise to pay to repay the face value of the maturity date and a periodic interest. A bond issued for the purpose of recapitalisation is called recapitalisation bonds.
- The government will issue recapitalisation bonds, which banks will subscribe and enter it as an investment in their books.
- The banks will lend money to the government for subscribing the bonds.
- This money raised by the government through these bonds will go back to banks as capital.
- This will immediately strengthen the balance-sheet of the banks and show capital-adequacy.
- Since the government is always solvent, the money lent to the government for subscribing recap bonds is free from becoming a bad loan.
- The funds mobilized from the sale of the bonds will not come as part of the fiscal deficit. But the interest payment for it will be a part of the fiscal deficit.

### BACKGROUND

Between 1993 and 1995, the then government issued recapitalisation bonds to help distressed banks. According to media reports, as much as Rs 20,000 crore was infused into public sector banks through this method in the 1990s. Not just to help distressed public sector banks, the government, in 2006 had announced the issuance of special bonds to the oil marketing companies. The government had issued bonds worth Rs 2,000 crore to three oil-marketing companies to compensate them for under-recoveries in their domestic LPG and Kerosene operations.

**DNA TECHNOLOGY (USE AND APPLICATION) REGULATION BILL, 2018**

*The Union Cabinet has approved The DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill 2018.*

**OBJECTIVES**

- (i) Speedier justice delivery.
- (ii) Increased conviction rate.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- The primary intended purpose for enactment of "The DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill" is for expanding the application of DNA-based forensic technologies to support and strengthen the justice delivery system of the country.
- The utility of DNA based technologies for solving crimes, and to identify missing persons, is well recognized across the world.
- By providing for the mandatory accreditation and regulation of DNA laboratories, the Bill seeks to ensure that with the proposed expanded use of this technology in the country.
- There is also the assurance that the DNA test results are reliable and the data remain protected from misuse or abuse in terms of the privacy rights of our citizens.
- Bill's provisions will enable the cross-matching between persons who have been reported missing on the one hand and unidentified dead bodies found in various parts of the country on the other, and also for establishing the identity of victims in mass disasters.

**BACKGROUND**

Forensic DNA profiling is of proven value in solving cases involving offences that are categorized as affecting the human body (such as murder, rape, human trafficking, or grievous hurt), and those against property (including theft, burglary, and dacoity).

The aggregate incidence of such crimes in the country, as per the statistics of the **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** for 2016, is in excess of 3 lakhs per year. Of these, only a very small proportion is being subjected to DNA testing at present. It is expected that the expanded use of this technology in these categories of cases would result not only in **speedier justice delivery but also in increased conviction rates**, which at **present is only around 30%** (NCRB Statistics for 2016).

**BOOSTING FARMER INCOMES**

*Giving a major boost for the farmers' income, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the increase in the Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for all kharif crops for 2018-19 Season.*

**BACKGROUND**

The decision of the CCEA is a historic one as it redeems the promise of the pre-determined principle of fixing the MSPs at a level of at least 150 percent of the cost of production announced by the Union Budget for 2018-19. The **Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)** has recommended MSPs for all kharif crops broadly in line with the announced principle.

**ASHOK DALWAI COMMITTEE:** Central government has set up a eight-member panel (Inter-ministerial Committee) headed by **Ashok Dalwai**, additional secretary at the Agriculture Ministry to suggest ways to double farm incomes by 2022.

The committee would be to diversify risks in farming and chalk out ways in which integrated farming—food grains, horticulture and allied activities like livestock and fisheries—can boost farm incomes.

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Promoting cultivation of pulses can help India overcome nutrition insecurity, improve soil fertility by nitrogen fixation and provide income support to farmers.
- Thus, increased MSPs for pulses will give a price signal to farmers to increase acreage. Further enhanced MSPs would boost production of oilseeds and encourage investment in its productivity and help reduce India's import bill.
- Increase in MSPs of nutri-cereals will improve nutritional security and allow farmers to get higher prices.
- **Food Corporation of India (FCI)** and other designated State Agencies would continue to provide price support to the farmers in the case of cereals including nutri-cereals.
- **National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Limited (NAFED)**, **FCI**, **Small Farmers Agri -Business Consortium (SFAC)** and other designated Central Agencies would continue to undertake procurement of pulses and oilseeds.
- **Cotton Corporation of India (CCI)** will be the central nodal agency for undertaking price support operations for Cotton.

### **GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES**

- The premium rates to be paid by farmers are very low - **2 % of sum insured for all kharif crops, 1.5% for all rabi crops and 5 % for commercial and horticulture crops** under smart technology through phones & remote sensing for quick estimation and early settlement of claims.
- The Government has also launched a **Mobile App "Crop Insurance"** which will help farmers to find out complete details about insurance cover available in their area and to calculate the insurance premium for notified crops.
- The Government has also launched a scheme to develop a pan India electronic trading platform under '**National Agriculture Market' (NAM)** aiming to integrate 585 regulated markets with the common e-market platform in order to facilitate better price discovery and ensure remunerative prices to farmers.
- Government has also formulated a new **model Agricultural Produce and Livestock Marketing (Promotion & Facilitation) Act, 2017** to provide farmers market options beyond the existing APMC regulated market yards.
- **Soil Health Cards** are being issued to farmers across the country. These will be renewed every two years. The card provides information on fertility status of soil and a soil test based advisory on use of fertilizers.
- Under **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)**, the Government is promoting organic farming and development of potential market for organic products.
- The **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana** is being implemented with the vision of extending the coverage of irrigation '**Har Khet ko Pani**' and improving water use efficiency '**Per Drop More Crop**' in a focused manner with end to end solution on source creation, distribution, management, field application and extension activities.
- Government is focusing on improving production and productivity of crops such as rice, wheat, coarse grains and pulses under the **National Food Security Mission**.
- A dedicated **online interface e-Krishi Samvad** provides direct and effective solutions to problems faced by farmers.

- Government is encouraging formation of **Farmer Producer Organisations**. The Budget for 2018-19 has extended a favourable taxation treatment to Farmer Producers Organisations (FPOs) for helping farmers aggregate their needs of inputs, farm services, processing and sale operations.
- Government has set up a buffer stock of pulses and domestic procurement of pulses is also being done under **Price Stabilization Fund (PSF)** mainly with a view to protect consumers.
- A handbook for women farmers '**Farm Women Friendly Hand Book**' containing special provisions and package of assistance which women farmers can claim under various on-going Missions/ Submissions/ Schemes of Department of Agriculture, Cooperation & Farmers Welfare has been brought out.

*The Budget for 2018-19 indicated that increasing MSP is not adequate and it is more important that farmers should get full benefit of the announced MSP. For this, it is essential that if price of the agriculture produce market is less than MSP, then Government should purchase either at MSP or work in a manner to provide MSP for the farmers through some other mechanism.*

### **CACP**

- The **Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP)** is an attached office of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare, Government of India. It came into existence in January 1965.
- Currently, the Commission comprises a Chairman, Member Secretary, one Member (Official) and two Members (Non-Official).
- It is mandated to recommend minimum support prices (MSPs) to incentivize the cultivators to adopt modern technology, and raise productivity and overall grain production in line with the emerging demand patterns in the country.
- As of now, CACP recommends MSPs of 23 commodities, which comprise 7 cereals (paddy, wheat, maize, sorghum, pearl millet, barley and ragi), 5 pulses (gram, tur, moong, urad, lentil), 7 oilseeds (groundnut, rapeseed-mustard, soyabean, seasmum, sunflower, safflower, nigerseed), and 4 commercial crops (copra, sugarcane, cotton and raw jute).
- CACP submits its recommendations to the government in the form of Price Policy Reports every year, separately for five groups of commodities namely Kharif crops, Rabi crops, Sugarcane, Raw Jute and Copra.

### **KHAN PRAHARI APP**

**Union Ministry of Coal launched the Coal Mine Surveillance & Management System (CMSMS) and Mobile Application 'Khan Prahari' developed by CMPDI, Ranchi a Subsidiary of CIL and Bhaskaracharya Institute of Space Application and Geo-informatics (BISAG).**

### **CMSMS**

- The basic objective of CMSMS is reporting, monitoring and taking suitable action on unauthorised coal mining activities.
- The CMSMS is a web-based GIS application through which location of sites for unauthorised mining can be detected.
- The basic platform used in the system is of Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology's (MeiTY) map which provides village level information.
- The leasehold boundary of all the coal mines are displayed on this map.
- The system will use satellite data to detect changes by which unauthorised mining activity extending beyond the allotted lease area can be detected and suitable action can be taken on it.

- The CMSMS will also provide other important information like reclamation work being done by Coal India Limited which is being monitored every year by CMPDI using satellite data. Status of Environmental Clearances /Forest Clearances etc. are also linked for information in this system.

#### **KHAN PRAHARI APP**

- Khan Prahari is a tool for reporting any activity taking place related to illegal coal mining like rat hole mining, pilferage etc.
- One can upload geo-tagged photographs of the incident along with textual information directly to the system.
- Hence, both satellite data and human information will be used to capture information on the unauthorised mining activities.
- Once reported, the information will be automatically directed to the nodal officers to take suitable action on those activities. The complainant can also track his complaint through the system.
- The uniqueness of the system is that it uses satellite data as well as public input to capture information on unauthorised coal mining activities and also take appropriate action on them with due transparency.

#### **ONLINE GUIDANCE SYSTEM: CCI**

***Competition Commission of India (CCI) launched an Online Guidance System for determining notifiability of merger & acquisitions (combinations) in terms of the Competition Act, 2002. The Guidance System has been named as “Do It Yourself (DIY): A notifiability check for mergers & acquisitions under the Competition Act, 2002”***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The online guidance system has been launched as part of CCI’s outreach initiatives and measures to simplify compliance requirements regarding combinations.
- The interactive online application has been developed based on relevant provisions of the Competition Act, 2002, relevant regulations issued thereunder and exemption notifications issued by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.
- This application envisages a staged process to guide the stakeholders in determining whether a merger/acquisition is notifiable to CCI.

#### **COMPETITION COMMISSION OF INDIA**

- The Competition Act, 2002, as amended by the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2007, follows the philosophy of modern competition laws.
- The Act prohibits anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises and regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control and M&A), which causes or likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.
- CCI consists of a Chairperson and 6 Members appointed by the Central Government.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

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

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

### **RECENTLY IN NEWS**

Competition Commission will soon have only three members besides the chairman, with the government deciding to “rightsize” the fair trade regulator. With the decision, the total number of posts, including that of chairperson, would be reduced from seven at present to four.

### **UNILATERAL ADVANCE PRICING AGREEMENTS**

***The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has entered into three Unilateral Advance Pricing Agreements (UAPA). With the signing of these Agreements, the total number of APAs entered into by the CBDT has gone up to 223, which inter alia include 20 Bilateral APAs.***

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

The UAPAs entered to pertain to consumer industry, automobile and precious stones & metals sectors of the economy. The international transactions covered in the agreements pertain to provision of corporate guarantee, purchase of brand, availing of grading services, availing of management services and payment of royalty.

### **ADVANCE PRICING AGREEMENTS**

*An APA is a contract, usually for multiple years, between a taxpayer and at least one tax authority specifying the pricing method that the taxpayer will apply to its related-company transactions. These programmes are designed to help taxpayers voluntarily resolve actual or potential transfer pricing disputes in a proactive, cooperative manner, as an alternative to the traditional examination process.*

- An advance pricing agreement (APA) is an ahead-of-time agreement between a taxpayer and a tax authority on an appropriate transfer pricing methodology (TPM) for a set of transactions at issue over a fixed period of time.
- The sole objective of the APA is to bring tax certainty in international transactions and overcome the issues due to transfer pricing between related parties.
- The concept of Advanced Pricing Agreement (APA) was introduced in India via the Finance Act 2012.

### **HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCING AGENCY**

***The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the proposal for expanding the scope of Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) by enhancing its capital base to Rs. 10,000 crore and tasking it to mobilise Rs. 1,00,000 crore for Revitalizing Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE) by 2022.***

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The Cabinet has also permitted the HEFA to mobilise Rs 1,00,000 crore over the next 4 years till 2022 to meet the infrastructure needs of these institutions.
- The CCEA has also approved increasing the authorized share capital of HEFA to Rs. 10,000 crore, and approved infusing additional Government equity of Rs. 5,000 crore (in addition to Rs. 1,000 crore already provided) in HEFA.

- The CCEA has also approved that the modalities for raising money from the market through Government guaranteed bonds and commercial borrowings would be decided in consultation with the Department of Economic Affairs so that the funds are mobilized at the least cost
- This would enable addressing the needs of all educational institutions with differing financial capacity in an inclusive manner.
- This would enable HEFA to leverage additional resources from the market to supplement equity, to be deployed to fund the requirements of institutions. Government guarantee would eliminate the risk factor in Bonds issue and attract investment in to this important national activity.

#### **HIGHER EDUCATION FINANCING AGENCY**

- HEFA was formed as a non-banking financial company to give a major push for creation of high quality infrastructure in premier educational institutions.
- It was registered as a Section 8 Company under the Companies Act.
- It was set up as a joint venture between the HRD ministry and Canara bank.
- It will raise funds from the market and mobilize CSR funds from PSUs/Corporates.
- It will also have equity share from Central government (Rs. 5000 crore) and Canara Bank.
- The funding will also be available to government-run schools Kendriya Vidyalayas and Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas.
- Funding - HEFA will directly release the sanctioned amount to vendors or contractors only after the certification of executing agency and educational institutions.
- All the Centrally Funded Institutions will have to repay the borrowed amount (loans) in a time frame of over 10 years.

#### **BS VI EMISSION NORMS**

***ICAT has completed the first BS-VI certification for a heavy duty engine model for M/s Volvo Eicher Commercial Vehicle Limited. The engine has been developed and manufactured indigenously by Volvo Eicher in India.***

#### **BACKGROUND**

The pro-active approach from the Government of India has made the country leapfrog from the conventional BS-IV to directly adopt BS-VI emission norms as the next level for regulatory framework in India. The BS-VI emission standards are much more elaborate in their scope and integrate substantial changes to existing emission standards ensuring cleaner products to the consumer. Besides the more stringent limits on the gaseous emission components, the particulate matter (PM) limits have also been significantly reduced along with the introduction of particle number (PN) limits.

#### **ICAT**

- The ***International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT)*** is a division of ***NATRiP implementation society (NATIS)***, under the administrative control of ***Ministry of Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises***, Government of India.
- ICAT is the first of new world class centers established under the ***National Automotive Testing and R&D Infrastructure Project (NATRiP)*** with the main objective of carrying out Research & Development besides extending homologation facilities in the field of Automotive Engineering.
- ICAT is one of the prime testing agencies recognized by the Government of India as one of the accredited ***'Type Approval and Homologation' agencies*** in India under ***Central Motor Vehicle Rules (CMVR)*** and has also been recognized as ***Scientific and Industrial Research Organization***

**(SIRO)** by the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR), since Feb 2010, by BIS for Tyre Testing, Safety Glasses and by **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)** for emission and noise testing of generator sets.

- ICAT has emerged as a comprehensive technical partner of the automotive industry.

#### **MEETING OF TASK FORCE ON E-COMMERCE**

*The first meeting of the Task Force on e-commerce held in New Delhi.*

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The meeting deliberated upon the suggestions emerging from the sub-group meetings were on wide ranging issues such as **cross border data flows, taxation, trade facilitation and logistics, consumer confidence, IPR and future tech, FDI and competition issues.**
- It was decided to set up a Task Force in the first meeting of the Think Tank, on the framework for national policy on e-commerce.
- The Task Force was further divided into nine sub-groups for preparing recommendations for India's national policy on e-commerce.

#### **NATIONAL HEALTH STACK**

*India witnessing significant trends in health: increasing prevalence of non-communicable diseases for instance, as well as marked demographic shifts.*

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The National Health Stack (NHS) envisages a centralized health record for all citizens of the country in order to streamline the health information and facilitate effective management of the same.
- The proposed NHS is an approach to address the challenge and seeks to employ latest technology including **Big Data Analytics and Machine Learning Artificial Intelligence**, a state of art Policy Mark-up Language and create a unified health identity of citizens - as they navigate across services across levels of care, i.e. Primary, Secondary and Tertiary and also across Public and Private.
- Once implemented, the National Health Stack will significantly bring down the costs of health protection, converge disparate systems to ensure a cashless and seamlessly integrated experience for the poorest beneficiaries, and promote wellness across the population.

#### **INTERNATIONAL ROUND TABLE CONFERENCE ON "DATA FOR NEW INDIA"**

*The Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has organised a two-day International Round Table Conference at New Delhi.*

*The **objective** of the Round Table Conference is to **identify innovative ideas for improving the statistical system in India**, taking cue from the best practices followed in advanced countries like Canada, UK and Australia. Such a Conference is being organized in India for the first time.*

In the Conference, the experts from National and International agencies would deliberate on key statistical issues, such as **data governance structure and capabilities, organizational issues, managing data systems in a federal structure and resource mobilization for ensuring quality statistical products** to be produced.

The conference has also suggested measures paving way for initiating the reform process in the Indian Statistical System.

### **DATA PRIVACY/PROTECTION**

Justice **B.N. SRIKRISHNA Committee** is to study issues relating to **Data Protection bill**.

A right to protect one's data on online platform constitutes **data privacy**. Such a data could either be concerned with an individual, enterprise or even a government.

### **DATA PROTECTION LAWS IN INDIA**

Data protection in India is governed by loosely constructed provisions of the Information Technology Amended Act, 2008 (ITAA) under section 43A & 72A of the Act. Compensation for failure to protect data (section 43A) was introduced by way of an amendment in 2008, which states the liability of a body corporate to compensate in case of negligence in maintaining & securing the **'sensitive data'**.

However, state fails to define **'sensitive data'**.

Although 3 year later, IT rules 2011 were issued by WIPO defining in detail the term 'sensitive data' & what it entails of.

Breach of data privacy has also been mentioned under the ITAA & is punishable under **Section 72A**.

### **CONCERNS RELATED TO DATA**

1. No ownership over the content of our own- there by create property rights for the entity that licensed the use of the device or platform to you.
2. Issue of data protection relating to data that identifies you (personal data) and data that describes you (created by observing you, your content and activities).
3. Physical location & online activities are aggressively tracked.
4. Entities in the value chain have assumed full ownership of this data while the real owner does not have any right on the same.
5. With the advances in **Artificial Intelligence & Big Data**, this data became very valuable.

### **WAY FORWARD**

- There is an urgent need to create a technology framework to ensure that the data owners have full control on their data & every entity which holds and uses the data follows the broadly accepted principles of notice, choice & consent, collection limitation, purpose limitation, disclosure of information norms, security openness & accountability.
- There is need to create a policy framework which should recognise & formalise the ownership, right & responsibilities of various entities in the various chain.
- It should also create analogous framework for data as in case of normal properties such as those dealing with inheritance.
- Urgent need to create a citizen centric data ecosystem that empowers individuals with control and visibility over their data.
- **Co-regulatory approach** for the governance of data protection in India could be another solution.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA COMMUNICATION HUB**

***Proposed by union government to monitor the digital chatter (communication) of citizens.***

***Implemented by ministry of information & broadcasting.***

The bidder once successful would be required to monitor-local editions of newspapers, cable channels, FM radio stations and influential social media handles.

This proposal raises serious questions about surveillances state, right to privacy & data protection.

1. **SURVEILLANCE STATE:** is that the government can analyse one's digital footprint to detect our sexual orientation or political reference. Combined with one's Aadhar data, the setting up of a totalitarian regime will complete.
2. Private data & personal information in India are still exposed to serious risks from the state & non-state actors.  
*EX. With the most no. of Facebook users in the world, India has taken no effective steps to investigate the Cambridge analytic data leak whereas US, UK & Singapore have triggered high level of inquiries into Facebook operations.*
3. Present legal framework around data protection in India is grossly inadequate.
4. In the **JUSTICE K.S PUTTASWAMY (RETD.) Vs. UNION OF INDIA judgement 2017**, SC held that informational privacy to be the facet of **right to privacy** (case decided by the constitution bench looked at whether privacy is a fundamental right).

### **SUGGESTIONS**

- Government should focus on enacting tough data protection laws which ensure a balance between individual rights and legitimate concerns of state like national security or investigation of crime.
- As European Union moving towards a more secure data regime under **GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION** and India could also follow the Steps towards the idea like it.

*'Privacy as an inherent right and upheld the individual 's right to control dissemination of his\her personal information'*

### **PRADHAN MANTRI AWAS YOJANA - URBAN**

***Under PMAY (U) so far more than 51 Lakhs dwelling units have been sanctioned against the validated demand of 1 crore in last 3 years of implementation.***

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The proposed **Global Housing construction technology challenge** is being undertaken to expedite filling up the housing construction gap.
- The fact is that the Global Housing construction technology challenge has been proposed to use the opportunity of large scale construction under PMAY-U to attract the best available global construction technologies which could ensure delivery of houses at a minimum cost, in minimum time while ensuring maximum number of houses in a given area.
- This will help in technology transfer to India so that ultimately these globally best available construction technologies and designs get adopted in the country benefiting the construction industry at large.
- The **Global Housing Construction Technology Challenge (GHTC-I)** may help us adopt those technologies to suit local conditions and requirements.
- Progress of the houses on the ground are being monitored through geo-tagging using space technology.

The Government of India is committed to provide “*Housing for All*” by the end of the Mission period-2022. A *National Urban Housing Fund* for Rs. 60,000 crores has been set up for raising Extra Budgetary Resources (EBR) in phases, for the rapid implementation of PMAY (U).

### **CENTRE FOR SKILLING & TECHNICAL SUPPORTS**

***Government has inaugurated the CIPET: Centre for Skilling & Technical Support (CSTS) at ITI Building and laying the foundation stone of new Central Institute of Plastics Engineering & Technology (CIPET) Building at Doiwala, Dehradun.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The CIPET Centre at Doiwala will train and develop around 1000 students in the first year of its operation through various skill development training programmes and subsequently Diploma level programmes.
- The existing plastics industries in Uttarakhand are located at places such as Roorkee, Dehradun, Rudrapur etc. The budding entrepreneurs will derive immense benefits through the technology support services and skilled manpower offered by upcoming CIPET facility.
- The CIPET: CSTS at Dehradun is being established having funding support of Government and of India and Government of Uttarakhand on **50:50 basis**.
- CIPET, under the Department of Chemicals & Petrochemicals, Government of India, offers Diploma, Post Diploma, Post Graduate Diploma, Undergraduate, Post Graduate & Doctoral programmes in the entire gamut of plastics engineering and technology.
- CIPET has established two **Schools for Advanced Research in Polymers (SARP) – Advanced Research School for Technology & Product Simulation (ARSTPS) & Laboratory for Advanced Research in Polymeric Materials (LARPM)**.
- These SARPs exclusively focus on application oriented sponsored research projects in the niche area of Polymer Science & Technology.
- Plastics industries spread across the country are utilizing the Technology Support Services provided by CIPET to all key sectors of Indian economy viz., Agriculture, Automobiles, Aerospace, Building & Construction, Information Technology, Electrical & Electronics, Telecommunications, Defence, Medical, FMCG etc.
- CIPET is contributing towards yet another initiative of Govt. of India – “Start-up India”. Every year around 2-3 % of the student take-up entrepreneurship and they in-turn provide employment to thousands of youth.

#### **BACKGROUND**

CIPET has emerged as an Apex plastics technology institution, not only in India but also in Asia. CIPET’s Alumni network spreads across the globe. It is fully devoted to ‘STAR’ – Skill Development, Technology Support Services, Academic and Research in all the domains of Plastics Engineering & Technology, which include Design, CAD/CAM/CAE, Tooling, Processing and Testing, and Quality Control for the growth of Plastics & allied industries in the country. To meet the industry demands, 09 more CIPET centres are in process of implementation at Medak, Jaipur, Jammu & Kashmir, Bihar, Varanasi, Agartala, Chandrapur and Mumbai.

### **INDIA SMART CITIES FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM**

***The India Smart Cities Fellowship Program is designed to provide valuable experience to the youth interested in smart cities specifically, and urban renewal sector in general and will bring in new***

*ideas, passion and energy to the challenging but exciting work of implementing cutting edge, high-impact solutions to key urban problems.*

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- MoHUA will engage 30 young graduates/post graduates and PhDs in the fields of Urban Planning, Urban Design, Engineering, Information and Technology, Urban Mobility, Finance, Social Sector, and Environmental issues as Smart Cities Fellows.
- The period of engagement is 1-year extendable upto 3 years.
- They will provide necessary support to Office of Mission Director, Smart Cities in MoHUA and/or CEOs of selected Smart Cities in terms of analytics, research, documentation, independent assessment, visualization or any other related activities including preparation of reports, posters, dossiers, etc.

### **INDIA SMART CITIES INTERNSHIP (ISCI) PROGRAM**

- MoHUA will engage students pursuing Under Graduate/Graduate/Post Graduate degree as Interns to help implementation of Smart City Projects in various States/Cities.
- The internship will be on unpaid basis for a period of 6 to 12 weeks.
- They will be given an Experience Certificate at the end successful completion of the program.
- ISCI will be given exposure in the following areas of development under Smart Cities Mission including Urban Planning, Urban Design, Engineering, Information and Technology, Urban Mobility, Finance, Social Sector, and Environmental issues.
- The 'Interns' shall be a part of the Smart Cities Mission, and their role primarily would be in implementation /reporting /evaluation and monitoring /knowledge management/stakeholder engagement/ media outreach and other similar activities as assigned to them by the Mission Director (SCM).

### **CITIES INVESTMENT TO INNOVATE, INTEGRATE & SUSTAIN (CITIIS) CHALLENGE**

*When Smart Cities Mission was launched on 25 June 2015 a competitive, challenge process was used to select the 100 Smart Cities.*

- Now, the Challenge process is being applied to project implementation, in line with the NITI Aayog guideline where under the Indo-French partnership program, at least 15 projects would be selected through an All-India Challenge.
- The projects would be in four sectors- **Sustainable Mobility, Public Open Spaces, Urban governance & ICT and Social and Organizational Innovation in low-income settlements.**
- The duration of the program will be three years (FY2018-19 to FY2020- 21).
- A Loan of EUR 100 million would be extended by AFD to selected CITIIS projects in the form of grant.
- The repayment of the principle and interest would be equally shared by the Central Government and State Government on 50:50 basis.
- The CITIIS grant is expected to cover from minimum 50% up to 80% of the project cost subject to a maximum of INR 80 Cr. and additional funding amounting to least 20% to be secured by the awarded cities through its own resources.

### **LOCAL AREA PLAN (LAP) & TOWN PLANNING SCHEME (TPS)**

- The Local Area Plan (LAP) and Town Planning Scheme (TPS) has been formulated under the AMRUT to enable planning for developing infrastructure in the Brownfield areas (those parts of

the city that are already developed but not able to sustain the pressure on the existing infrastructure) & the Greenfield areas (periphery of the city that is prone to haphazard growth and development), respectively.

- They will be implemented in 25 selected cities on pilot basis.
- The existing areas or Brownfield areas can be redeveloped by preparing Local Area based Plans (LAP). While at the same time, the Town Planning Schemes (TPS) can be implemented for planned urban expansion in the peripheral Greenfield areas.
- The Scheme will enable the selected cities to formulate Local Area based Plans (LAP) and Town Planning Schemes (TPS) for which 100% central assistance would be available.
- Based on the formulation of Local Area based Plans (LAPs) and Town Planning Schemes (TPS) by the city concerned, prioritization of urban infrastructure projects would be taken up.

### **ZERO BUDGET NATURAL FARMING**

***Government of Andhra Pradesh has launched a scale out plan to transition 6 million farms/farmers to 100% chemical free agriculture by 2024.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- This is an unprecedented transformation towards sustainable agriculture at such a massive level.
- Andhra Pradesh has become the first state to implement the ZBNF policy.
- Rythu Sadhikara Samstha, the agency is implementing the policy.

### **ZERO BUDGET NATURAL FARMING**

ZBNF is a set of farming methods and also a grassroots peasant movement, which has spread to various states Karnataka was the first state where it has evolved.

ZBNF promises to end a reliance on loans and drastically cut production costs, ending the debt cycle for desperate farmers. The word “budget” refers to credit and expenses, thus the phrase ‘zero budget’ means without using any credit and without spending any money on purchased inputs. ‘Natural farming’ means farming with nature and without chemicals.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

1. To improve the welfare of the farmers.
2. Reduce the cost of farm inputs.
3. Cut toxins in food.
4. Improve soil quality.
5. Livelihood for rural poor.

#### **FARMERS USING MATERIAL**

- Seed treated with cow dung & urine.
- Soil rejuvenated with cow dung & urine and other local materials to increase microbes.
- Cover crops, straw and other organic matter to retain soil moisture and build humus.
- Soil aeration for favourable conditions
- These methods are combined with natural insect management methods when required.

#### **ADVANTAGES**

- In ZBNF, yields of various cash crops and food crops have been found to be significantly higher when compared with chemical farming.

***For ex: on an average yield in cotton was 11% higher than that of ZBNF cotton plot.***

- Input cost are near zero as no fertilizer and pesticides are used. Thus, ***higher yield with lower inputs.***
- ZBNF farms are able to withstand draughts and floods.
- Planting of multiple crops and border crops on the same field has provided varied income and nutrient sources.
- There is reduced use of water and electricity.
- Improved health of farmers.
- Flourishing local ecosystems and biodiversity and no toxic chemical residues in the environment.

*In 2016 Sikkim was declared India's first fully organic state. But organic agriculture often involves addition of large amounts of manure, vermicompost and other materials that are required in bulk and need to be purchased.*

### **WAY FORWARD**

- Systematic scaling up farming practices based on agro-ecological principles in opposition to the dominant chemical agriculture.
- Scaling relies primarily on farmers and local groups i.e. bottom-up approach and process is required.
- As ZBNF is applied in India's various agro-ecological zones, making farmers the innovators essential.
- Resilient food system is the need of the day given variability of the monsoons due to global warming and declining groundwater in large parts of India.

### **WORLD CUSTOMS ORGANISATION**

***India has become the Vice-Chair (Regional Head) of the Asia Pacific Region of World Customs Organisation (WCO) for a period of two years, from July 2018 to June 2020.***

The WCO has divided its Membership into six Regions. Each of the six Regions is represented by a regionally elected Vice-Chairperson to the WCO Council.

### **WORLD CUSTOM ORGANISATION**

- WCO began in 1947 when the thirteen European Governments represented in the Committee for European Economic Co-operation agreed to set up a Study Group. This Group examined the possibility of establishing one or more inter-European Customs Unions based on the principles of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).
- In 1948, the Study Group set up two committees - an Economic Committee and a Customs Committee. The Economic Committee was the predecessor of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Customs Committee became the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC).
- In 1952, the Convention formally establishing the CCC came into force.
- After years of membership growth, in 1994 the Council adopted the working name World Customs Organization.
- The World Customs Organization (WCO), established in 1952 as the Customs Co-operation Council (CCC) is an independent intergovernmental body whose mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations.
- WCO represents 182 Customs administrations across the globe that collectively process approximately 98% of world trade.

## GENERIC MEDICINES

***India is recognized globally as one of the key players in the field of generic medicines. By 2020 India is likely to be among the top three pharmaceutical markets by incremental growth and 6th largest market globally in absolute size.***

### BACKGROUND

The Indian government began encouraging more drug manufacturing by Indian companies in the early 1960s, and with the Patents Act in 1970. The ***Patents Act*** removed composition patents for foods and drugs, and though it kept process patents, these were shortened to a period of five to seven years. The resulting lack of patent protection created a niche in both the Indian and global markets that Indian companies filled by reverse-engineering new processes for manufacturing low-cost drugs. The code of ethics issued by the Medical Council of India in 2002 calls for physicians to prescribe drugs by their generic names only.

### GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION

Most recently, a countrywide campaign has been under way to ensure availability of generic medicines under the ***Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana***. A total 861 PMBJ Kendras are functional in 28 states — at which 99 private manufacturing companies, certified by the World Health Organisation, have been empanelled to supply generic drugs, specially manufactured and packed for the PMBJP.

### DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A GENERIC DRUG & BRAND – NAME DRUG

When a company develops a new drug — often after years of research — it applies for a patent, which prohibits anyone else from making the drug for a fixed period. To recover the cost of research and development, companies usually price their brand- name drugs on the higher side. Once the patent expires, other manufacturers duplicate and market their own versions of the drug. Since the manufacture of these generic drugs do not involve a repeat of the extensive clinical trials to prove their safety and efficacy, it costs less to develop them. Generic drugs are, therefore, cheaper.

However, because the compounds in the generic versions have the same molecular structure as the brand-name version, their quality is essentially the same. The generic drug has the same “active ingredient” as the brand-name drug. This ingredient is the one that cures the patient; and other, “inert ingredients”, which give the drug its colour, shape or taste, vary from the brand-name drug to the generics.

### How can the government ensure that generics, apart from being cheap, are also safe for the patient?

The priority of the government should be to bring a legal framework to ensure “quality” in generic drug testing. No more than 1% of generic drugs sold in India undergo quality tests. Generic drugs should work “therapeutically” and the government should ensure “uniform quality”.

Also, the government has to clarify how it will ensure that once a doctor prescribes the generic drug, detailing its medical composition, the pharmacist or chemist will give the most appropriate drug to the patient. Even on the question of price, studies have shown that it is the retailer’s margin that often plays the key role in deciding how much the patient pays for a drug. To take the example of Cetirizine, while the difference between the brand-name drug and the generic could be Rs 10 (Rs 35 and Rs 25 respectively), depending on what the retailer keeps in each case, the actual difference in

the price paid by a customer of a brand-name drug and that of a generic could be, perhaps, only Rs 4 (Rs 27 and Rs 23).

### **GENERIC MEDICINES**

*A generic drug is a pharmaceutical drug that has the same chemical substance as the drug that was originally developed, patented and innovated.*

- Generic drugs are allowed for sale after the expiry of the patent of the original drugs. Because the active chemical substance is the same, the medical profile of generics is believed to be equivalent in performance.
- The generic drug has the same ***active pharmaceutical ingredient (API)*** as the original, but it may differ in characteristics such as manufacturing process, formulation, excipients, color, taste, and packaging.
- Although they may not be associated with a particular company, generic drugs are usually subject to government regulations in the countries in which they are dispensed.
- A generic drug must contain the same active ingredients as the original brand name formulation.

### **NATIONAL INTEGRATED LOGISTIC POLICY**

*Discussions were held to explore ways to strengthen World Bank support towards India's development with collaboration in specific areas of trade, logistics and investment.*

In the meeting it was agreed that a workshop will be conducted with World Bank and concerned Ministries in order to identify specific interventions required to streamline logistics in the country with an aim ***to integrate Indian products into Global value chains.***

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- ***National Integrated Logistic Policy*** will focus on increasing the capacity of storage and warehousing and other value-added services.
- Multimodal logistics parks, integrating various transportation modes, are also being developed right up to the district level.
- The (NILP) will reduced the cost of goods and make Indian product more competitive.

### **16<sup>TH</sup> WORKSHOP ON GREENHOUSE GAS INVENTORIES IN ASIA**

***16th Workshop on Greenhouse Gas Inventories in Asia (WGIA16) stressed that while efforts of experts are necessary, there is also a need for an active involvement of people in the fight against climate change.***

***The four-day Workshop has been organized by the Ministry of Environment, Government of Japan.***

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- India have committed to achieve 175 GW of installed capacity of renewable energy generation by 2022.
- Other policy initiatives of the government include increasing penetration of LEDs, 5-10% Ethanol blending in petrol, increasing efficiency of coal power plants, and more efficient public transport.
- Leapfrog from ***Bharat Stage IV (Euro IV) to Bharat Stage VI (Euro VI) standards for vehicular emissions by 2020.***
- As per the Paris Agreement, there is a need to enhance transparency in reporting, which is possible only through adequate finance and capacity building.

- India outlined ***Green Good Deeds, Green Good Behaviour, Green Good Practices and Green Social Responsibility*** being promoted amongst different stakeholders and accepted at various international forums, including BRICS Environment Ministers meeting recently.
- India is well poised to meet the target of creating an additional ***carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>*** equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by the year 2030.
- India is on track to meet its Copenhagen commitment of reduction in emissions intensity of GDP by ***20-25% by 2020*** with reference to ***2005 level***.
- According to the UNEP Gap Report 2017, India is also on track to meeting its Paris commitment of ***33-35% reduction*** in emissions intensity of its GDP by ***2030 from 2005 level***.

#### **WORKSHOP ON GREENHOUSE GAS INVENTORIE**

- WGIA is an initiative of Government of Japan to improve the quality of Greenhouse Gas Inventories of Asian countries by building capacities through training and exchange of experience.
- A reliable and robust inventory is the backbone of climate action.
- Such efforts will contribute towards meeting the requirements towards enhanced reporting and transparency as required under the Convention and its Paris Agreement.
- 15 countries including ***Brunei, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam*** are WGIA members and around 100 GHG inventory experts from these countries participated along with representatives from UNFCCC, IPCC, FAO and other specialized agencies.
- India is hosting WGIA for the first time.

#### **WORLD POPULATION DAY**

***Union Ministry of Health & Family Welfare inaugurated the workshop with the theme ‘Population stabilization: A right and Responsibility’ on the occasion of World Population Day 2018, New Delhi.***

The workshop was jointly organized by the ***Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and Jansankhya Sthirta Kosh.***

The theme was: ***Small Family, Happy Family.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- From a ***TFR of 2.9 in 2015 to a TFR rate close to 2.2 in 2018*** means India is progressing at a good rate of decline.
- Over the last few years, a host of new initiatives have been undertaken under the Family Planning programme such as expanded choice of contraceptives, ***Mission Parivar Vikas*** in 146 High Priority Districts (HPDs) in the ***7 high focus states, Family Planning Logistics Management Information System (FP-LMIS)***, a comprehensive 360 degree media campaign including a dedicated FP webpage, radio chat shows etc. in an effort to take services down to the last mile.
- The recent expansion of basket of choices is poised to further impact the contraceptive coverage in the country.
- The Government is extensively focussing on strengthening post pregnancy contraception (***post-partum as well as post-abortion***) to meet the unmet need for family planning specifically in the immediate post-partum and post-abortion period.
- The ***population stabilization*** efforts have an economic argument attached to it, as the demographic dividend of the country can be harnessed only when the population is healthy.

- The ***Lifecycle Framework*** ensures that the health and wellbeing of the mother and child, carrying in the adolescent stage and further is taken care of.
- Stated that the programs and interventions under the umbrella of ***National Health Mission*** have played a very crucial role in this.
- As part of the Mission Parivar Vikas program, the focus is on creating awareness about the expanding choices of family planning and on ensuring that the services are easily accessible by the people.
- '***Prerna Awards***' to BPL couples who have broken the stereotype of early marriage, early childbirth and repeated child birth and have helped change the mindsets of the community.
- PRERNA, a Responsible Parenthood Strategy is being implemented in seven focus states namely ***Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Rajasthan.***

#### **TECHNOLOGY CHALLENGE FOR SEWERAGE SYSTEMS**

***The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, which was entrusted with the task, has now launched the "Technology Challenge: Identifying solutions for cleaning of Sewerage Systems and Septic Tanks". The said challenge will be a part of the Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention which is to be held on October 2, 2018.***

***Elimination of human entry into sewer drains and cleaning of the septic tank is the ultimate goal of this Challenge.***

#### **OBJECTIVES**

- Identify technological as well as business process innovations.
- Endorse viable business models that are suitable for a different size, geographies, and class of cities.
- Pilot test and handhold to scale the shortlisted technologies/solutions in select project cities.
- Bridge the gap between innovators/manufacturers and beneficiaries- i.e. ULBs, citizens

#### **CATEGORIES**

The Challenge shall be conducted for two separate categories.

- ***Category A***-Technological solutions for cleaning and maintenance of sewerage systems that eliminate need for human entry.
- ***Category B***-Technological solutions for cleaning and maintenance of septic tanks that eliminate need for human entry.

**BACKGROUND:** Three labourers died cleaning a sewage treatment plant in Loni, Ghaziabad. The deaths were allegedly caused by poisonous gas in the plant. Reports suggest that none of them were even aware of the gases and were without the necessary safety equipment.

- Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC) released in 2015, states that there were around 0.18 million manual scavenging households in rural areas.
- A government survey identifies 12,226 manual scavengers in 12 states. Most septic tanks are emptied manually in Indian cities.
- The lack of proper safeguards puts manual scavengers at risk of infections, which are occasionally fatal.
- Statistics show that 80% of India's sewage cleaners die before they turn 60, after contracting various infectious diseases.

## MANUAL SCAVENGING

- Manual scavenging was banned in India in 1993. Employing people to the profession carries possible imprisonment penalties for up to one year and fine of 50,000 rupees. Still, demand for scavengers remains high.
- The **2013 Prohibition of Employment of Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act** aimed to introduce safety measures for manual scavengers and encouraged their rehabilitation. Activists and manual scavengers have since criticized the law on the grounds that **it does not strictly ban the practice.**
- Manual scavenging also persists due to the continued presence of “**insanitary latrines,**” where human waste has to be cleaned physically and not by a machine or sewage system. The majority of such latrines are dry latrines, which don’t use water. **According to the 2011 Census, there are about 2.6 million dry latrines in India.**
- Protective gear like gloves, gas masks and boots are often not provided by employers, in violation of the 2013 law, leading to diseases and even death. There is no proper accountability system in place.
- The 2013 Act allows manual scavenging if the employer provides ‘protective gear’; However, the Act does not define what constitutes ‘protective gear,’ creating a possibility for employers to exploit this provision
- Social Exclusion experienced by Manual Scavengers: Both for belonging to a low caste and being in a stigmatized profession
- The **National Policy on Faecal Sludge and Septage Management, 2017,** states that employment of manual scavengers is illegal, but it does not suggest mechanical alternatives to unclog septic tanks, drains and sewers.

***High gender pay gap (2014 report by Human Rights Watch (HRW) titled “Cleaning Human Waste released”)-***

- Patriarchy made women clean where no one else wants to clean up. Rehabilitation is also more difficult for women as most of them are middle-aged and elderly.
- When we look at the practice of manual scavenging in light of the caste hierarchies prevalent it becomes amply evident that manual scavenging has traditionally been relegated to those present at the bottom-most step of this caste ladder.
- So, even among the Dalits, manual scavengers are one of the lower-most sub-groups, and are treated as such, even by the Dalits who occupy a higher place than them in the caste hierarchy.

## SUGGESTIONS

**Fulfil Present Legal Provisions:** Neither contractors nor municipalities are providing the equipment and logistical and medical support mandated by the law. Thus, even as we consider technology solutions, there is a need to fulfil the provisions of the law already there.

**Human Rights need to be Respected:** India cannot claim to be “clean,” because we have doomed a specific caste to clean our toilets, our garbage and our sewers manually. Some 95% of the people engaged in this degrading practice are Dalits. The National Human Rights Commission has termed manual scavenging as one of the “worst violations” of human rights.

**“Open defecation free”** not only means that there is no visible faeces in the environment; it also means that every household and public institution uses safe technology to dispose of the same.

**Bio-toilets:** Bio-digester toilets are designed to convert human waste into gases and manure.

### **ZERO WASTE BIODIGESTER TECHNOLOGY**

The ***zero-waste biodigester technology*** uses psychrotrophic bacteria like Clostridium and Methanosarcina (these microbes can live in cold or hot climate and feed on waste to survive) to break down human excreta into usable water and gas. Once applied, the bacteria can work for a lifetime.

Waste from toilets are sent to a giant underground bio-digester tank where anaerobic digestion takes place. ***Methane gas*** produced in the tanks can be used for different purposes, including firing up gas stoves and generating electricity while the leftovers (popularly called ***Humanure or 'Human manure'***) can be used for gardening and farming. It does not have any geographical or temperature limitation and also does away with the need to set up large sewerage networks.

The technology was originally developed by the ***Defence Research Development Organization's (DRDO)***. The best feature of this toilet is that it totally does away with manual scavenging, is low on maintenance and installation cost and can be adapted to any geo-climatic conditions of the country.

### **16<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL ENERGY FORUM**

***Marking the growing prominence of India in the global energy map, the 16th International Energy Forum Ministerial (IEF16) is being hosted by India at New Delhi.***

***Theme: "The Future of Global Energy Security – Transition, Technology, Trade and Investment"***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- A mutually supportive relationship between producers and consumers.
- Optimal use of the neutral platform of the IEF to build a global consensus on 'responsible pricing', that serves the mutual interests of both producers and consumers
- India imports 80 percent of its oil needs and is the third largest oil consumer in the entire world.
- India's energy vision comprises of four pillars –
  - Energy access.
  - Energy efficiency.
  - Energy sustainability.
  - Energy security.

#### **SUGGESTIONS:** India needs to -

- Establish an integrated planning process that factors in the implications of decisions concerning fossil fuels on renewables and vice versa and develop a policy mindset that enables the fulfilment of short-term objectives without compromising longer-term goals.
- Correct the imbalances in the energy value chain, to minimize avoidable losses and create a unified energy market.
- The government should consider legislating an omnibus "energy responsibility and security act". This will raise public awareness on the interconnections between the various components of energy and between energy and the rest of the economy.
- There is a need to invest in supportive infrastructure, regulations, skills and innovation.
- While CNG buses have been introduced in various cities, the only way for a totally emissions-free public transport is by going all electric.
- Energy security would mean our ability to manufacture the full value chain in solar panels far more than getting access to equity oil or gas anywhere in the world.
- Required to shift from the incumbent fossil fuel energy system to a "clean energy" system.

**INTERNATIONAL ENERGY FORUM**

- Aims to foster greater mutual understanding and awareness of common energy interests among its members
- Its 72 members countries are signatories to the IEF Charter, which outlines the framework of the global energy dialogue through this inter-governmental arrangement.
- Covering six continents and accounting for around 90 per cent of global supply and demand for oil and gas, the IEF is unique in that it comprises not only consuming and producing countries of the IEA and OPEC, but also Transit States and major players outside of their memberships, including Argentina, China, India, Mexico, Russia and South Africa.

**RASHTRIYA GRAM SWARAJ ABHIYAN**

*The Cabinet Committee on Economic gave its approval for restructured Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA).*

**RASHTRIYA GRAM SWARAJ ABHIYAN**

The Finance Minister announced the launch of new restructured scheme of Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (RGSA), for developing and strengthening the capacities of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) for rural local governance to become more responsive towards local development needs, preparing the participatory plans that leverage technology, efficient and optimum utilization of available resources for realizing sustainable solutions to local problems linked to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

*In 2017-18, the Finance Minister announced to undertake a **Mission Antyodaya** to bring one crore households out of poverty to make 50,000 Gram Panchayats poverty free. Accordingly, convergent action with Mission Antyodaya has been integrated into this scheme.*

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- It will extend to all States and Union territories of the Country and will also include institutions of rural local government in non-Part IX areas, where Panchayats do not exist.
- The Scheme will have both Central and State Component.
- **Central Component includes:**
  1. National Plan of Technical Assistance.
  2. Mission mode project on e-Panchayat.
  3. Incentivization of Panchayat.
- **State Component includes:** Capacity Building of Panchayati Raj Institutions.
- Central Component will be fully funded by Government of India.
- However, Centre & State funding pattern for State Component will be 60:40 for all States, except North East and Hill States where funding pattern will be 90:10. For all Union Territories (UTs) (with and without legislatures), the Central share will be 100%.
- The implementation and monitoring of the activities of the scheme will broadly be aligned for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with main thrust on Panchayats identified under Mission Antyodaya and 115 Aspirational districts as identified by NITI Aayog.
- The Scheme will converge capacity building initiatives of other Ministries with particular focus on those Ministries which will be impacted substantially by this Scheme.

**FACTS**

- **April 24:** National Panchayati Raj Day

- Father of Local Self Government in India: **Lord Ripon**
- Committee to first recommend constitutional status for Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI): **Ashok Mehta Committee**
- Committee that became the basis for drafting an amendment bill aimed at conferring the constitutional status and protection to the Panchayati Raj institutions: **Gadgil Committee**.

### **PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2018**

***The Union Cabinet has given its approval to the Protection of Human Rights (Amendments) Bill, 2018 for better protection and promotion of human rights in the country.***

#### **OBJECTIVES**

- Strengthen the Human Rights Institutions of India further for effective discharge of their mandates, roles and responsibilities.
- Will be in perfect sync with the agreed global standards and benchmarks towards ensuring the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual in the country.

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Proposes to include “National Commission for Protection of Child Rights” as deemed Member of the Commission.
- Add a woman Member in the composition of the Commission.
- Enlarge the scope of eligibility and scope of selection of Chairperson, National Human Rights Commission as well as the State Human Rights Commission.
- Incorporate a mechanism to look after the cases of human rights violation in the Union Territories.
- Amend the term of office of Chairperson and Members of National Human Rights Commission and State Human Rights Commission to make it in consonance with the terms of Chairperson and Members of other Commissions.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The amendment to the ***Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993*** will make National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) more compliant with the Paris Principle concerning its autonomy, independence, pluralism and wide-ranging functions in order to effectively protect and promote human rights.

### **BHAKTI SAINT RAMANUJA**

***Bhakti saint Ramanuja statue is set to become the world’s second tallest statue of a seated figure, at 216 feet in Hyderabad. The year 2017 marked 1000th birth anniversary.***

#### **RAMANUJA**

- Birth place Sriperumbudur, Tamil Nadu.
- He was the greatest Vaishnava acharya. (Vaishnava Theologist)
- Born in 1017 CE, Ramanujacharya was a Hindu theologian, philosopher, and one of the most important exponents of the ***Sri Vaishnavism tradition*** within Hinduism.
- His guru – ***Yadava Prakasa*** (part of Advaita Vedanta monastic tradition)
- Ramanuja followed the footsteps of Indian Alvars tradition, the scholars Nathamuni and Yamunacharya.

- Famous works – wrote ***bhasya*** on the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita, all in Sanskrit.
- Ramanuja’s philosophical foundation was qualified monism, and is called ***Vishishtadvaita*** (sub-school of Vedanta) in the Hindu tradition.
- The Visishtadvaita is so called because it inculcates the ***Advaita (or oneness of God) with Vishesha (or attributes)***. It is, therefore, ***qualified monism***.
- According to him ***God is Saguna*** brahman.
- He also advocated ***prabattimarga*** or path of self-surrender to God.
- To attain salvation – through intense ***devotion to Vishnu***.
- His ideas are one of three sub-schools in Vedanta, the other two are known as ***Adi Shankara’s Advaita (absolute monism) and Madhvacharya’s Dvaita (dualism)***.

#### **RIMPAC**

- RIMPAC – world’s largest international maritime warfare exercise
- 26 Countries including India to participate in RIMPAC
- The exercise started from June 27 to August 2, 2018 in and around Hawaiian Islands and Southern California.
- The theme for this year’s RIMPAC exercise is “***Capable, Adaptive, Partners.***”
- Four countries ***Brazil, Israel, Sri Lanka and Vietnam*** are participating for first time.
- US had withdrawn invitation of Chinese navy in response to China’s continued illegal militarisation of islands in disputed South China Sea.
- It is held once in two years.
- India is a member.

#### **INS SAHAYADRI**

***It recently participated in RIMPAC and has been adjudged runner-up in an innovation competition.***

- INS Sahyadri is an indigenously built stealth frigate.
- It participated in trilateral Malabar war games with Japan and the U.S. off the Coast of Guam.
- INS Sahyadri presented the ‘idea of integrating yoga into our daily life as technology for well-being during extended deployments for ships’.
- The idea was appreciated by representatives of participating countries.

#### **LEPROSY CASES**

***India is mentioned in a new WHO report on neglected tropical diseases (NTD), it is also one of the handful of countries around the world that have shown an increase in leprosy cases.***

The number of leprosy cases in India went up from 1,25,785 to 1,27,326 between 2014 and 2015.

#### **LEPROSY**

- Leprosy is a chronic infectious disease caused by *Mycobacterium leprae*, an acid-fast, rod-shaped bacillus.
- The disease mainly affects the skin, the peripheral nerves, mucosa of the upper respiratory tract, and the eyes.
- Leprosy is curable and treatment in the early stages can prevent disability.
- Leprosy is curable with multidrug therapy (MDT).
- Leprosy is transmitted via droplets, from the nose and mouth, during close and frequent contacts with untreated cases.

**INDIAN GOVERNMENT INITIATIVE**

**National Leprosy Eradication Programme:** It is a centrally sponsored Health Scheme of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Govt. of India with the objective to arrest the disease activity in all the known cases of leprosy through early diagnosis and treatment.

**OPERATION SAGAR RANI**

*Contaminated fishes preserved using formalin (formaldehyde) were seized in Kerala and also in Tamil Nadu.*

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Formalin, a cancer-inducing chemical, is used to prolong the shelf-life of fish.
- Formalin causes irritation in the eyes, throat, skin and stomach. In the long run continued exposure causes harm to the kidneys, liver and can even cause cancers.
- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) officials have been undertaking tests (under Operation Sagar Rani)
- It ensures the safety of fish sold in the market and ensures that it was handled hygienically at the handling and distribution centres.

**LIVESTREAMING OF COURT PROCEEDINGS**

*Supreme Court is ready to go live on camera while the government mooted a separate TV channel for live-streaming court proceedings.*

Livestreaming is only an extension of the open court system where the public can walk in and watch out the court proceedings. However, with court proceedings beamed live on air, litigants can watch them as they happen.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Livestreaming would help litigants to follow the proceedings in their cases and also help them to assess their lawyer's performance.
- With the entire country watching them, there could be fewer interruptions, raised voices and adjournments from the lawyers.
- There should be some reservations about livestreaming cases involving national security concerns, matrimonial disputes and rape case proceedings.
- Agreements with the broadcasters should be on a non-commercial basis. No one should profit from the arrangement.
- Citizen's have the right to information and matters of constitutional and national importance can be livestreamed. If livestreams of the court's proceeding is not possible, alternatively the video recording should be allowed.

Thus, this is for to advance the rule of law and to bring accessibility and transparency in the administration of justice.

**SWACHH SURVEKSHAN GRAMEEN 2018**

*Union Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MDWS) has launched Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2018 (SSG 2018).*

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- The SSG 2018 will assign 65% weightage to findings and outcome and 35% to service level parameters to be obtained from Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) of the MDWS.
- The weights to different elements of SSG are direct observation of sanitation in public places (30%), citizen's feedback on sanitation parameters (35%), service level progress on sanitation progress in the country as per SBMG-MIS (35%).
- The SSG 2018 will be conducted by independent survey agency in all districts from 1st to 31st August 2018.
- It will also take feedback from over 50 lakh citizens on SBM related issues through direct interaction as well as online feedback. The top performing states and districts are expected to be awarded on 2nd October 2018.

### **SWACHH SURVEKSHAN GRAMEEN**

- SSG is a rural cleanliness survey to rank all states and districts on basis of qualitative and quantitative evaluation.
- The objective of SSG 2018 is to undertake ranking of states and districts on basis of their performance attained on key quantitative and qualitative Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G) parameters. The rankings will be based on considering set of comprehensive cleanliness parameters.
- The criteria of SSG-2018 include survey of public places, citizens' perspective of cleanliness, their recommendations and data from SBM-G. As part of it, 6,980 villages in 698 districts across India will be covered. It will cover total 34,000 public places namely schools, anganwadis, public health centres, haat/bazaars/religious places in these villages.

### **WORLD BANK REPORT ON GIRLS EDUCATION**

***Failing to let girls finish their education could cost the world as much as \$30 trillion in lost earnings and productivity annually, yet more than 130 million girls are out of school globally, the World Bank.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Women who have completed secondary education are more likely to work and earn on average nearly twice as much as those with no schooling.
- About 132 million girls worldwide aged 6 to 17 do not attend school, while fewer than two-thirds of those in low-income nations finish primary school, and only a third finish lower secondary school.
- If every girl in the world finished 12 years of quality education, lifetime earnings for women could increase by \$15 trillion to \$30 trillion every year.
- Other positive impacts of completing secondary school education for girls include a **reduction in child marriage, lower fertility rates in countries with high population growth, and reduced child mortality and malnutrition,**

### **INDIAN COUNCIL OF WORLD AFFAIRS**

***Dr. TCA Raghavan is the new Director General (DG) of Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA).***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- It was established in 1943 by group of Indian intellectuals as think tank.

- It was established as non-official, non-political and non-profit organisation under Registration of Societies Act 1860.
- It was declared institution of national importance by Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA), 2001 enacted by Parliament.
- The Vice President of India is the ex-officio President of ICWA, while the Minister of External Affairs is its Vice-President.
- ICWA is devoted exclusively for the study of international relations and foreign affairs.
- It had conducted historic international conferences like Asian Relations Conference in 1947 under leadership Sarojini Naidu and United Nations and New World Order in 1994.

### NILIGIRI TAHR

***As per the latest studies, climate change is threatening the Nilgiri tahr. It is estimated that the endangered wild goat could lose approximately 60% of its habitat, starting from the 2030s.***

### BACKGROUND

There are only around 2,500 tahrs left in the wild and their population — “small and isolated, making them vulnerable to local extinction” — shows a “decreasing” trend, as per the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

- It is listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972.
- Endemic to the Nilgiri Hills and the southern portion of the Western Ghats in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala in Southern India.
- It is the State animal of Tamil Nadu.
- Currently, the only populations with more than 300 individuals are in Eravikulam National Park and in the Grass Hills in Anamalai.

### TARGET OLYMPIC PODIUM SCHEME

***The Mission Olympic Cell has included the entire Indian hockey team in the Target Olympic Podium Scheme, rewarding the players for their silver medal-winning performance at the Champions Trophy.***

### TARGET OLYMPIC PODIUM SCHEME

- Scheme is implemented by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.
- Its objective is to identify and support potential medal prospects for 2016 and 2020 Olympic Games
- Under the scheme the selected athletes are provided financial assistance for their customized training at Institutes.
- These sports institutes will have world class facilities and other necessary support to improve performance and higher position in medals tally for the country.
- Under it benchmark for selection of athletes is in relation to international standards.
- ***Abhinav Bindra Committee*** is setup with objective of identifying and supporting potential medal prospects for 2020 and 2024 Olympic Games
- TOPS was launched under the ambit of National Sports Development Fund (NSDF).
- Under it, Sports Authority of India (SAI) and federations, which are members of Mission Olympic Cell (MOC), will be nodal agencies for disbursement of funds.

**NET NEUTRALITY**

***The Telecom Commission, the highest decision-making body in the Department of Telecommunications, approved the net neutrality rules implying internet will remain open to everybody in the country.***

Apart from net neutrality rules, the commission has also approved the **new telecom policy — National Digital Communications Policy (NDCP), 2018** — aimed at promoting investments, ease of doing business, and emerging technologies like 5G.

**Internet of things (IoT)** as a class will not be exempted from net neutrality, certain categories of IoT which come under critical services will be left out.

**NET NEUTRALITY**

It is the principle that all traffic on the Internet must be treated equally by Internet service providers. Those advocating Net neutrality believe all bits of data are equal, and, therefore, should not be discriminated on the basis of content, site or user. This has largely been the default mode since Internet started.

The system of net neutrality is in place since the beginning of the internet and is followed in time and different parts of the world. It stands for:

- Equal accessible to all sites
- Same data cost to access a site (there should be no price differential).
- No zero rating.

**SIGNIFICANCE**

- Provides Right to Choose to the users as they are not barred by any restrictions on site access.
- Without Net Neutrality, cable and phone companies could carve the Internet into fast and slow lanes. An ISP could slow down its competitors' content or block political opinions it disagreed with.
- ISPs could charge extra fees to the few content companies that could afford to pay for preferential treatment — relegating everyone else to a slower tier of service. This would destroy the open Internet.
- Creates a level-playing field for all web services and websites. Whether it is a blog owned and managed by one person or Facebook which employs thousands of engineers, all websites have access to the same connection speed.
- It is up to a user to access what he wants on the web.

**UNSC RESOLUTION 2427**

***The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has adopted Resolution 2427. The resolution has won unanimous approval of the 15 members of the council.***

**HIGHLIGHTS**

Over 21,000 cases of grave violations of children's rights in armed conflict have been verified by the United Nations for 2017, a drastic increase from the previous year with 15,500 violations, according to an annual report of the UN secretary-general on children and armed conflict that was released last week. Among the violations in 2017, some 15,000 were perpetrated by non-state armed groups and about 6,000 were committed by government forces, according to the report.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

*The resolution is aimed at further crystalizing the protection of children in armed conflicts, including by combating their recruitment by non-State armed groups and treating formerly recruited children primarily as victims.*

- It strongly condemns the recruitment and use of children by parties to armed conflict as well as their re-recruitment, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, and abductions.
- It also condemns attacks against schools and hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access by parties to armed conflict and all other violations of international law committed against children in situations of armed conflict.
- It demands that all relevant parties immediately put an end to such practices and take special measures to protect children.
- It also emphasizes the responsibility of all states to put an end to impunity and to investigate and prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other egregious crimes perpetrated against children.
- The resolution reiterates the Security Council's readiness to adopt targeted and graduated measures against persistent perpetrators of violations and abuses committed against children.
- It calls on member states and the United Nations to mainstream child protection into all relevant activities in conflict prevention, conflict and post-conflict situations with the aim of sustaining peace and preventing conflict.

**INDIA - EBRD**

***India has joined the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) as the 69th shareholder, paving the way for more joint investment with Indian companies across the EBRD's regions.***

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) is an international financial institution founded in 1991.
- As a multilateral developmental investment bank, the EBRD uses investment as a tool to build market economies.
- Initially focused on the countries of the former Eastern Bloc it expanded to support development in more than 30 countries from central Europe to central Asia.
- Similar to other multilateral development banks, the EBRD has members from all over the world (North America, Africa, Asia and Australia, see below), with the biggest shareholder being the United States, but only lends regionally in its countries of operations.
- Headquartered in London.
- The EBRD is owned by 69 countries and two EU institutions, 69th being India recently in July 2018.
- Despite its public sector shareholders, it invests in private enterprises, together with commercial partners.
- The EBRD is unique among development banks in that it will not finance coal power plants due to their environmental impact.
- In 2018 42% of the Bank's investment was in green economy, in support of the Paris climate goals.

**WORLD'S 5<sup>TH</sup> LARGEST CULTIVATED AREA UNDER GM CROPS: INDIA**

***India has the world's fifth largest cultivated area under genetically modified (GM) crops, at 11.4 million hectares (mh) in 2017.***

But unlike other big growers, its entire GM crop area is under a single crop cotton incorporating genes from the *Bacillus thuringiensis* or Bt soil bacterium coding for resistance against heliothis bollworm insect pests.

- The country with the highest area under transgenic crops, at 75 mh, is the United States.
- Similarly, Brazil's total 50.2 mh GM crop.
- Argentina 23.6 mh.
- Canada's total 13.1 mh.

**ISAAA's latest 'Global Status of Commercialized Biotech/ GM Crops in 2017'** report shows farmers across the world to have planted 189.8 mh under transgenic crops last year. This is as against 1.7 mh in 1996, the year when they were grown commercially for the first time. Total planted area grew particularly during the first decade of this century, while slowing down in the last five years.

**GLOBAL INNOVATION INDEX 2018**

***Global Innovation Index 2018 has placed India at the 57th position among 130 countries.***

*GII is jointly released by Cornell University, INSEAD and World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO).*

- *GII ranks 126 economies based on 80 indicators.*
- The GII 2018 marks the 11th edition of the GII, and the beginning of its second decade providing data and insights gathered from tracking innovation across the globe.
- This year's edition, is dedicated to the theme of ***Energizing the World with Innovation.***
- It analyses the energy innovation landscape of the next decade and identifies possible breakthroughs in fields such as energy production, storage, distribution, and consumption.
- It also looks at how breakthrough innovation occurs at the grassroots level and describes how small-scale renewable systems are on the rise.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- This year, India has moved up 3 places as compared to 60th rank in GII 2017 and emerged as top-ranked economy in Central and South Asia.
- It has consistently moving up on global ranking from 81st in 2015 to ***57th*** this year.
- India is a top performer in the lower middle income group, where it is ranked at fifth position.
- It is the most innovative country in its region of central and southern Asia.
- In the indicators that capture the quality of innovation inputs and outputs, India is ranked second after China in the lower and upper middle income group combined.
- However, India has fared badly on indicators such as ease of starting business, political stability and safety, overall education and environmental performance.
- ***Switzerland is at the top.*** Since 2011, Switzerland has been ranked at the top every year.
- This year, Netherlands follows at second place and Sweden at third. The US drops down to sixth from fourth last year.
- On a new indicator – mobile-app creation – Cyprus, Finland and Lithuania emerged as global leaders in development of mobile apps relative to GDP.

**RELIGIOUS MINORITY TO JEWS**

***Gujarat Government has granted religious minority status to Jews living in the state.***

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Jews living in Gujarat will get religious minority rights envisaged in Constitution of India and various acts and rules of the state government.
- Gujarat is third state in India to grant religious minority status to Jews after West Bengal and Maharashtra.
- The Synagogue Judah Hyam Hall is the only place of worship in Delhi for Jews.
- Constitution of India has not defined word 'Minority' and only refers to 'Minorities' but it speaks of those 'based on religion or language' and rights of minorities have been spelt out in Constitution in detail.
- Six religious communities, viz. Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Zoroastrians (Parsis) and Jains have been notified in Gazette of India as minority communities by Union Government all over India.
- The Jewish community in India is one among a large number of groups who had come from outside the country's modern territorial borders and made India their home.
- Main Jews groups in India: Cochin Jews; Chennai/Madras Jews; Bene Israel; Baghdadi Jews; Delhi Jews; Bnei Menashe & Bene Ephraim (Telugu Jews).

**WORLD SANSKRIT CONFERENCE 2018**

***The 2018 World Sanskrit Conference (WSC) is being hosted by the Department of Asian Studies at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. It is 17th such conference.***

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- The World Sanskrit Conference is the premier international forum for professional researchers and educators of the Sanskrit language and its literatures, and of the history, religion, and cultures of premodern South Asia.
- It is convened every three years under the auspices of the International Association of Sanskrit Studies.

**IASS**

- At the 29th International Congress of Orientalists, held in Paris in 1973, Sanskritists from various countries endorsed the formation of the ***International Association of Sanskrit Studies*** and drafted its constitution.
- The main task of the IASS was agreed to be the organizing of a World Sanskrit Conference at different venues around the world.
- The 1972 International Sanskrit Conference in New Delhi was recognised retrospectively as the First World Sanskrit Conference.
- Indologica Taurinensia is the journal of the IASS.

**CURRENCY DERIVATIVES**

***The Multi Commodity Exchange of India (MCX), the country's largest commodity bourse in terms of market share, is planning to enter the currency derivatives segment.***

**BACKGROUND**

Prior to the introduction of currency derivatives on exchanges, there was only the ***OTC – over the counter*** – market to hedge currency risks and where forward contracts were negotiated and entered into. It was kind of an opaque and closed market where mostly banks and financial institutions traded. Exchange-based currency derivatives segment is a regulated and transparent market that can be used by small businesses and even individuals to hedge their currency risks.

### **CURRENCY DERIVATIVES**

***Currency derivatives are exchange-based futures and options contracts that allow one to hedge against currency movements.***

- One can use a currency future contract to exchange one currency for another at a future date at a price decided on the day of the purchase of the contract.
- In India, one can use such derivative contracts to hedge against currencies like dollar, euro, U.K. pound and yen.
- Corporates, especially those with a significant exposure to imports or exports, use these contracts to hedge against their exposure to a certain currency.
- While all such currency contracts are cash-settled in rupees, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), early this year, gave a go-ahead to start cross currency contracts as well on euro-dollar, pound-dollar and dollar-yen.

### **MCX**

- Multi Commodity Exchange (MCX) is an exchange like BSE and NSE where commodities are traded.
- It is a platform for commodity traders that facilitate online trading, settlement and clearing of commodity futures transactions, thereby providing a platform for risk management (hedging).
- It was established in November 2003 under the regulatory framework of FMC (Forward Markets Commission).
- In 2016, the FMC was merged with SEBI and MCX as an exchange falls under the regulatory purview of SEBI.

### **LEGAL ENTITY STATUS TO ANIMAL KINGDOM BY UTTARAKHAND HC**

***The Uttarakhand high court has declared the entire animal kingdom, including birds and aquatic animals, as a legal entity having rights of a “living person”. The move aims to ensure “greater welfare” of animals.***

### **BACKGROUND**

The order came in response to a public interest litigation seeking directions to restrict the movement of horse carts/tongas between Nepal and India through Champawat district and highlighted that ailing, infirm and old horses were being abandoned by the owners in the Indian territory.

Uttarakhand high court in March last year accorded the status of “living entity” to the Ganga and Yamuna rivers, a decision subsequently stayed by the Supreme Court.

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

***The entire animal kingdom, including avian and aquatic ones, are declared as legal entities having a distinct persona with corresponding rights, duties and liabilities of a living person.***

The court cited a 2014 Supreme Court judgment to say any disturbance from the “basic environment which includes all forms of life, including animals life, which are necessary for human life, fall within the meaning of Article 21 of the Constitution”.

- Create an animal welfare committee in every district of the state.
- The court also gave directions ranging from the amount of load allowed to be pulled by various animals in accordance with the kind of carriage being pulled to the amount of riders per carriage.
- Further banning the use of spike or other sharp tackle or equipment on the animal, the court also directed the state government to ensure that if temperature exceeds 37 degree Celsius or drops below 5 degree Celsius, no person be permitted to keep in harness any animal used for the purpose of drawing vehicles.
- The court also went into the aspect of animal safety, highlighting the need for fluorescent reflectors in carriages and animals, certificates of unladen weight of vehicles, compulsory shelter of suitable size for horses, bullocks and stray cattle and a direction to the veterinary doctors of Uttarakhand to treat any stray animals brought to them or by visiting them.
- The court said as the carts driven by animals have no mechanical devices, animal-drawn carriages have to be given Right of Way over other vehicles.

A legal entity means an entity which acts like a natural person but only through a designated person, whose acts are processed within the ambit of law. This means the animal kingdom could be represented by a custodian.

#### **MATTALA AIRPORT**

***India has agreed to form a joint venture with Sri Lanka to operate the country's loss-making Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport in Hambantota.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- It is dubbed as the “world’s emptiest airport” due to a lack of flights.
- The airport infrastructure was funded through high interest Chinese commercial loans. The airport was officially opened in March 2013.
- The only international flight operating from there was halted in May due to recurrent losses and flight safety issues.

#### **SPECIES ADDED TO RECOVERY PROGRAMME**

***National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) recently added four species into the center's recovery Programme for critically endangered species. This decision will lead to targeted conservation of these species whose population is on the decline.***

The species are **Northern River Terrapin, Clouded Leopard, Arabian Sea Humpback Whale and Red Panda.**

#### **BACKGROUND**

- Terrapins have been exploited for illegal trade across borders, especially for its meat and carapace.
- Clouded leopard and Red Panda are facing habitat loss and poaching threat for their meat, medicine and pelts.

- While the Northern River Terrapin is largely found in West Bengal, the clouded leopard is found in Meghalaya, Mizoram, Sikkim and Assam while the Red Panda is largely found in Sikkim, western Arunachal Pradesh, North Bengal and parts of Meghalaya.
- Arabian Sea Humpback Whale is facing threats from accidental entanglement in fishing gears, ship strikes and seismic explorations.
- Humpback whales migrate towards India's west coast from Oman and there have been several instances of these gargantuan species getting beached on Maharashtra's long coastline.

### **SPECIES RECOVERY PROGRAMME**

- The species recovery programme of the Union Environment Ministry is implemented under Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats — a centrally sponsored umbrella scheme for management and conservation of parks, wildlife habitats and conservation.
- Started in 2008-09, IDWH is meant for providing support to protected areas (national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, conservation reserves and community reserves except tiger reserves), protection of wildlife outside protected areas and recovery programmes for saving critically endangered species and habitats.
- Species already included in the recovery programme: Snow Leopard, Bustard (including Floricans), Dolphin, Hangul, Nilgiri Tahr, Marine Turtles, Dugongs, Edible Nest Swiftlet, Asian Wild Buffalo, Nicobar Megapode, Manipur Brow-antlered Deer, Vultures, Malabar Civet, Indian Rhinoceros, Asiatic Lion, Swamp Deer and Jerdon's Courser.
- India is a party to the International Whaling commission that is committed to the protection of whales and its habitats in Indian waters.
- National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) is a statutory Board constituted in September 2003 under Section 5 of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.
- The NBWL is chaired by the Prime Minister.

### **UNESCO STATUS TO MUMBAI ARCHITECTURE**

***Mumbai's Art Deco buildings and Victorian Gothic Architectures were added to UNESCO's World Heritage List.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- This makes Mumbai city the second city in India after Ahmedabad to be inscribed on the World Heritage List.
- This is the third such honour for the metropolis after the Elephanta Caves and the majestic Victoria Terminus rechristened Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus railway station railway station which earned the coveted tag in 1987 and 2004 respectively.
- There are more than 200 Art Deco buildings in Mumbai, majority of them, built between the early 1930s and early 1950s.
- Such buildings are clustered together in the south of the coastal city along the marine drive area.
- These are sleeker buildings boasting curved corners, balconies, vertical lines and exotic motifs.
- They were built by wealthy Indians who sent their architects to Europe to come up with modern designs different to those of their colonial rulers.

#### **VICTORIAN GOTHIC STRUCTURE**

- These are predecessors of Art deco structures built by the British empire.

- These public buildings include the Old Secretariat (1857-74), University Library and Convention Hall (1874-78), the Bombay High Court (1878), the Public Works Department Office (1872), Watson's Hotel (1869), David Sa soon Library (1870), the Elphinstone College (1888), etc.

### **"MISSION SHAURYA"**

***Recently, 10 tribal students from residential schools in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra conquered Everest.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- 'Mission Shaurya' is an initiative of the Tribal department of the Maharashtra State Government.
- It aims to train tribal students to scale Mt. Everest.
- Mission Shakti - Maharashtra government has also announced this mission to impart special training and prepare tribal students for the Olympics 2024.

### **INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION FOR MIGRATION**

- IOM was established in 1951. It had been an observer to the UN since 1992.
- The agency joined the UN system as a related organization in September 2016.
- It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- It works in the field of migration with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners.
- The organisation has 166 members countries (including India) and 8 observer states.
- It aims to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced people.
- IOM works to help ensure the humane management of migration by providing services and advice to governments and migrants, promote international cooperation on migration issues.
- Mr. Vitorino of Portugal is the first Director General elected to IOM after it has become part of UN.

### **AGNI – V**

***The Agni series (I to V) missiles constitute the backbone of India's nuclear weapons delivery and part of nuclear triad.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Agni-V is India's longest-range ballistic missile which will be inducted into the nuclear arsenal soon.
- Earlier variants of the Agni family of long-range missiles have already been deployed.
- Agni – V is an Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) with a range of over 5,000 km and can reach most parts of China.
- It is powered by three stage solid fuelled missiles.
- It can carry a payload of 1.5 tonnes.
- It is a part of Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP).

### **ASIAN MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE ON DISASTER RISK REDUCTION 2018**

***The conference is to be held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia in the month of July.***

Theme of the AMCDRR 2018 is ***'Preventing Disaster Risk: Protecting Sustainable Development'***.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- It will enable governments and stakeholders to review progress made against the commitments at the AMCDRR 2016, i.e. the New Delhi Declaration, the Asia Regional Plan.
- It will provide a unique forum for those countries and cities that have not yet developed and/or updated their Disaster Risk Reduction strategies under the Sendai framework.
- India will participate in this conference and also organize a side event on Cultural Heritage and Disaster Risk Management.

**KOALA BEAR**

***Recently, an international team of scientists has successfully sequenced the whole genome of Koala bear.***

- It is a tree-dwelling marsupial of coastal eastern Australia.
- They have exceptional parental care and strange eating habits that they enjoy the leaves of eucalyptus that would be toxic or even fatal to most mammals.
- They are born after just 34-36 days of gestation without an immune system and spend almost six months developing in the pouch.
- It is listed as "**Vulnerable**" under IUCN's Red Data Book.

**REGIONAL RURAL BANKS**

***Union cabinet has recently approved the extension of the scheme of recapitalization of RRBs for the next 3 years upto 2019-20.***

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- RRBs are jointly owned by Government of India, the concerned State Government and Sponsor Banks with the issued capital in the ratio of 50:15:35 respectively.
- RRBs were set up with the objective to provide credit to the small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, artisans and small entrepreneurs in rural areas for development of productive activities.
- This will enable the RRBs to maintain the minimum prescribed Capital to Risk Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) of 9 per cent.
- The scheme of Recapitalization of RRBs started in FY 2010-11 and was extended twice in the year 2012-13 and 2015-16.

**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SAFAI KARMACHARIS**

***Union Cabinet has recently approved the creation of one post each of Vice-Chairperson and Member in the commission to fulfil desired objectives of welfare and development of Safai Karamcharis.***

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- With the enactment of "**The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013**", the mandate and scope of the commission has also been enlarged.
- The commission will monitor the implementation of the act and take suo-moto notice of matter relating to non-implementation of the Act.
- The commission will also advice central and state government for effective implementation.

**BACKGROUND**

- The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) was constituted in 1994 as a statutory body by “National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993”.
- But with the lapse of the act in 2004, the commission is acting as a Non-Statutory body of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- Its tenure is extended from time to time through government resolutions.
- The latest resolution in 2016 extended its tenure to 2019.

### TEJAS

- It is an indigenous fighter aircraft inducted in to Indian Airforce in the year 2016.
- It has recently commenced its operation.
- It is designed by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
- It is a single-seat, single-jet engine, multirole light fighter.
- It is the smallest and lightest multi-role supersonic fighter aircraft in its class.
- It can fire Air to Air Missiles, carry bombs and Precision Guided ammunition.
- It has its root in the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) programme, which began in the 1980s to replace the ageing MiG-21 fighters.
- MiG-21 fighters are purchased from Russia in 1961.

### MUDUMALAI TIGER RESERVE

***Union Ministry of Environment has recently issued notification declaring 438 sq.km of area around the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve as an ecosensitive zone.***

#### HIGHLIGHTS

- The notification followed a Supreme Court order calling for an eco-sensitive zone around all national parks
- Mudumalai Tiger Reserve is a critical part of the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve.
- The reserve, comprising the wildlife sanctuary and the national park, was declared a core tiger habitat in 2007.
- It extends over a core area of 321 sq.km and buffer area of 367 sq.km.
- The declaration of an eco-sensitive zone would place restrictions on polluting industries but it would not stop agriculture activities in the area.
- The following activities are restricted/prohibited in the eco-sensitive zone:
  - Commercial mining.
  - Setting up of industries causing pollution.
  - Establishment of major hydroelectric projects.
  - Use or production or processing of any hazardous substances.
  - Discharge of untreated effluents into natural water bodies or land area.
  - Setting up of new saw mills or brick kilns.

### STREE SWABHIMAN

***Stree Swabhiman is an initiative under Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology for promoting women’s menstrual health and hygiene.***

#### HIGHLIGHTS

- This initiative will provide access to sanitary napkins to the girls and women in rural areas.

- Accordingly, this move of central govt. will improve awareness on menstrual health and hygiene.
- Moreover, setting up and maintenance of semi-automatic and manual process production unit is easy and hassle free.
- In addition to this, each production unit will generate employment for 8-10 women.
- Common Service Centers (CSC) are going to implement this initiative at the root level across the country.
- CSC are committed for providing affordable, reliable and modern menstrual pads (eco-friendly) to women and girls in rural areas.
- This is unique initiative by CSC to protect Stree Swabhiman.
- Accordingly, these pads are safe to use and cheap in price.

### **NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL**

***Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel recently assumed charge as chairperson of the NGT.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- NGT was established in 2010 under NGT Act with its principal bench in Delhi.
- Its objective is to provide an effective and speedy disposal of cases pertaining to environment protection, conservation of forests and for seeking compensation for damages caused to people or property due to violation of environmental laws.
- The NGT has the power to hear all civil cases relating to environmental issues that are linked to the following laws –
  - The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.
  - The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.
  - The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.
  - The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
  - The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991.
  - The Biological Diversity Act, 2002.
- There is a bar on civil court to take cases under these listed laws in Schedule 1 of NGT act.
- The NGT has not been vested with powers to hear any matter relating to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, the Indian Forest Act, 1927 and various laws enacted by States relating to forests, tree preservation etc.
- The NGT is not bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, but shall be guided by principles of natural justice.

### **UNCTAD**

***Third Intergovernmental Group of Experts (IGE) on consumer protection was recently convened by UNCTAD.***

India was represented by Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.

#### **UNCTAD**

- UNCTAD is a permanent intergovernmental body established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1964.
- It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland and part of the UN Secretariat.
- It is a part of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG).
- It was formed specifically to handle the problems of developing countries dealing with trade, investment and development issues.

- Reports published by UNCTAD – ***World Economic Situation and Prospects Report, Trade and Development Report, World Investment Report, The Least Developed Countries Report, Information and Economy Report, Technology and Innovation Report and Commodities and Development Report.***

### **CONSUMER PROTECTION IN INDIA**

- The Consumer Protection Bill, 2018 was introduced in the Lok Sabha earlier this year to replace Consumer Protection Act, 1986.
- The Bill enforces consumer rights and provides a mechanism for redressal of complaints regarding defect in goods and deficiency in services.
- The Bill sets up a Central Consumer Protection Authority to promote, protect and enforce consumer rights as a class.
- The Bill establishes Consumer Protection Councils at the district, state and national levels to render advise on consumer protection.
- If a consumer suffers an injury from a defect in a good or a deficiency in service, he may file a claim of product liability against the manufacturer, the seller, or the service provider.
- Consumers in India have been guaranteed rights by the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 of Parliament, namely:
  - Right to Safety.
  - Right to be informed.
  - Right to choose.
  - Right to be heard.
  - Right to seek redressal.
  - Right to consumer education.

### **INSPIRE PROGRAMME**

***"Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research (INSPIRE)" is an innovative programme sponsored and managed by the Department of Science & Technology for attraction of talent to Science.***

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The basic objective of INSPIRE is to communicate to the youth of the country the excitements of creative pursuit of science, attract talent to the study of science at an early age.
- It helps in building the required critical human resource pool for strengthening and expanding the Science & Technology system and R&D base.
- A striking feature of the programme is that it does not believe in conducting competitive exams for identification of talent at any level.

### **INS TARANGINI**

***INS Tarangini is part of the first Training Squadron based at Kochi, under the Southern Naval Command of the Indian Navy.***

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The word Tarangini means 'the one that rides the waves'.
- It is the first ship of the Indian Navy to have circumnavigated the globe in the year 2003-04.
- It commenced 'Lokayan-18' from Kochi, to cover a distance of over 20,000 nautical miles to display the Indian flag at 15 ports across 13 countries.

- During its Lokayan voyage, it will participate in the prestigious 'tall ship races - 2018' at Sunderland Port in the UK.
- It has already participated in tall ship races conducted around the world in 2007, 2011 and 2015.

### **GOVARDHAN PARKRAMA**

***Union Tourism Ministry recently sanctions Rs.50 crore for development of Govardhan Parikrama in Mathura under PRASAD scheme.***

Under the 'PRASAD' scheme the focus is on development and beautification of the identified pilgrimage destinations. Whereas, in the 'Spiritual Circuit' identified under the Swadesh Darshan scheme, the thrust is on development of particular thematic circuit consisting of various religious/spiritual destination in a State and Union Territory.

- The 'National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Augmentation Drive' (PRASAD) has been launched by the Ministry of Tourism in the year 2014-15.
- Its objective is holistic development of identified pilgrimage and heritage destinations.

### **PRASAD SCHEME**

National Mission on ***Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASAD)*** to beautify and improve the amenities and infrastructure at pilgrimage centres of all faiths.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Integrated development of pilgrimage destinations in a planned, prioritized and sustainable manner to provide complete religious tourism experience.
- Harness pilgrimage tourism for its direct and multiplier effects on employment generation and economic development.
- Follow community-based development and pro-poor tourism concept in development of the pilgrimage destinations.
- Leveraging public capital and expertise.
- Enhancing the tourist attractiveness in a sustainable manner by developing world-class infrastructure in the religious destination.
- Creating awareness among the local communities about the importance of tourism for them in terms of increase in sources of income, improved living standards and overall development of the area.
- Promote local arts, culture, handicrafts, cuisine, etc., to generate livelihood in the identified places.

Under the PRASAD scheme thirteen sites have been identified for development, namely: ***Amritsar, Ajmer, Dwaraka, Mathura, Varanasi, Gaya, Puri, Amaravati, Kanchipuram, Vellankanni, Kedarnath, Kamakhya and Patna.***

### **NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR PROTECTION OF CHILD RIGHTS**

***Inundated with complaints from parents, NCPCR, the country's apex child rights body, has drafted regulations to put in place a uniform fee framework for unaided private schools.***

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR), a statutory body, is in the process of making a recommendation to that effect to the human resource development (HRD) ministry.
- Bringing relief to parents beset by frequent and arbitrary increases in school fees, a government commission is likely to suggest a 10% yearly cap on the fee hike permissible by private, unaided schools, with provisions for penalties in case of violations.
- Although fixing school fees is the domain of state governments, in the absence of a standard fee policy for unaided schools, there has been a growing clamour for central regulations.
- India has 3,50,000 private, unaided schools — 24% of all schools — where 75 million children, or 38% of all students, study.
- Such schools do not receive any grant from the government and have to generate their own revenue for sustenance.

#### **DRAFT PROPOSED**

- It will propose setting up a district fee regulatory authority in states to monitor school fee increases.
- The draft regulations will also suggest a formula for determining fees, based on a school's location, costs incurred, revenue earned, student strength, and other parameters.
- According to the draft regulations, if a school violates the norms provided in the uniform fee framework, it will be fined 1% of the revenue it generates in the first instance, which will increase to 2 % and 5% for a second and third violation.
- For any subsequent violation, NCPCR has proposed that the school be put in a "no admission category" and barred from admitting new students.
- "Instead of closing the school, which jeopardises the schooling of existing students, we have proposed that no fresh admission should be allowed in the school.
- The regulation of education-related matters is the domain of the HRD ministry, but NCPCR has stepped in to draft the proposed fee regulations for unaided schools, citing Section 13 of the Commission for Protection of Child Rights (CPCR) Act, 2005 and Section 32 of Right to Education (RTE) Act, which gives NCPCR the authority to review safeguards under the law to protect of child rights and recommend measures.

#### **UN PANEL DISCUSS DIGITAL COOPERATION**

***UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has set up a High-Level Panel on Digital Cooperation with people at the "frontiers of technology" and public policy to deal with the "dark side" of digital innovation like cyberwarfare and proliferation of hate speech.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The Panel will map trends in digital technologies, identify gaps and opportunities, and outline proposals for strengthening international cooperation.
- While "new tech developments from artificial intelligence to blockchain and robotics are emerging every day, the world is only beginning to address the dark side of innovation -- such as cybersecurity threats, the risks of cyber warfare, the magnification of hate speech, and violations of privacy."
- There is a need to seize the potential of technology while safeguarding against risks and unintended consequences.

**IR-BMS**

***Railways launched its first consolidated Bridge Management System (IR-BMS), a web-enabled IT application to store data on its 1.5 lakh bridges.***

The web-based platform will show the bridge master data, works data, information regarding inspection/monitoring and maintenance of the bridges and other essentials.

**INDIAN BRIDGE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

- IBMS – Indian Bridge Management Systems developed to create an inventory of all bridge assets on the National Highways (NH) in India, and apply a technical logic to manage the bridge assets during its life cycle.
- It generates detailed inventory data and condition ratings of assets, ensuring the dynamics of deterioration process are captured.
- This dynamism, in the deterioration process guides the inspection and rehabilitation of bridges.
- The system allows the users to assign priority to maintenance activity, based on the present condition of the bridge.
- Major stakeholders in the IBMS are the Government department, which owns the bridge assets and the general public, who use the bridges. Each stakeholder has benefits, in short-term and the long-term.
- Government benefits by the creation of database of all bridges in immediate present (6 months since IBMS initiation). This is the short-term benefit. In the long-term, it optimizes the utility of funds available for rehabilitation/ maintenance of the bridges.
- IBMS uses the principle of ‘FRWD – First Repair the Worst Damaged’, to ensure the entire bridge inventory is rendered safe.

**FEATURES**

- IBMS is the largest platform in the world, with a database, which could exceed 1,50,000 bridge structures owned by a single owner.
- The system to manage such a large number of asset, in a manner, where the field studies could be conducted with minimum efforts while collecting maximum details.
- The bridges were given a ‘Unique Identity Number’, which was the first step of the inventory creation.
- Then, their precise location details, in form of latitude and longitude, had to be collected in an auto-mode using the ground positioning system.
- On the completion of inventory data, the structural component rating is done using a 0 to 9 scale, to define the status of various bridge components like – Foundation, Piers, Super Structure, Deck, Scour Rating, Waterway Adequacy, Structural Status and also the Socio-Economic Parameter, which will decide the importance of the bridge, in relation to its contribution to daily social and economic activity of the area, in its immediate vicinity.

**INDIA’S 1<sup>ST</sup> INTERNET TELEPHONY SERVICE “WINGS”**

***State-run telecom firm BSNL unveiled first internet telephony service in the country that will allow users to dial any telephone number in India through its mobile app Wings’.***

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Now BSNL customers will be able to make calls using the company's mobile app Wings to any phone number in the country. Before this, phone calls on mobile apps was possible within users of a particular app and not on telephone numbers.
- Using this service, BSNL customers will be able to make calls on any network in the country even by using BSNL Wi-Fi or any other service provider.
- Telecom Commission, highest-decision making body of the Department of Telecom, had allowed companies who hold valid telecom licence, to provide app-based calling service even by using WiFi connection.
- The telecom service provider will be required to comply with all the interception and monitoring related requirements and calls will be charged by telecom operators and all rules related to normal calls will be applicable on them.

#### **LINING PROJECT OF SON CANAL**

***The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved USD 503-million lining project of the Son canal in Shahabad-Bhojpur region of Bihar which would benefit the agriculture sector immensely in the region.***

- The estimated cost of this project is USD 503 million (Rs 3272.49 crore) out of which USD 352 million is being provided by ADB.
- This project will bring immense benefits to the agriculture sector of Shahabad – Bhojpur region of Bihar.

#### **ADB**

- It is a regional development bank established on 22 August 1966 and is headquartered in the Philippines.
- It aims to facilitate economic development of countries in Asia. It also aims for an Asia and Pacific free from poverty.
- The bank admits the members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP, formerly known as the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East) and non-regional developed countries.
- Currently, it has 67 members – of which 48 are from within Asia and the Pacific and 19 outside.
- ADB is modelled closely on the World Bank and has a similar weighted voting system where votes are distributed in proportion with member's capital subscriptions.
- ADB raises funds through bond issues on the world's capital markets.
- ADB also rely on its members' contributions, retained earnings from its lending operations, and the repayment of loans.
- Japan holds the largest proportions of shares at 15.67%. The United States holds 15.56%, China holds 6.47%, India holds 6.36%, and Australia holds 5.81%.

#### **6<sup>TH</sup> BIENNIAL WORLD CITIES SUMMIT**

***The 6th Biennial World Cities Summit upholding exchange of views about city governance observed the vehement congregation of representatives of several local governments in Taiwan, several international counterparts, and business leaders in Singapore.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The summit focused on the sustainable development of cities, got started in Tandem with the Singapore International Water Week and the Clean Enviro Summit Singapore – the platforms for

policy makers and industry experts to discuss challenges and practices to address issues as to environment.

- The city has introduced open data programmes to create a smart city, made initiatives to solve civic problems, nurture start-ups and expand international networks.
- The smart streetlight systems installed in our city has brought a lot of change, with the smart city application the city has developed to tackle the challenges of rapid urban development.

### **CENTRE FOR DATA & AI**

***The National Association of Software and Services Companies (Nasscom), India's premier software lobby opened a Center of Excellence (CoE) for Data Science and Artificial Intelligence.***

***Nasscom also signed a MoU with NITI Aayog to collaboratively foster applied research, accelerating adoption and ethics, privacy and security.***

### **AIM**

With the aim to strengthen the country's AI ecosystem, the CoE and MoU, both aim to serve as a platform for intelligence-sharing and technology collaboration between stakeholders to build collective capabilities for the industry and country in the cutting-edge areas artificial intelligence.

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Nasscom would support the government's National Strategy for AI and will facilitate collaboration between NITI Aayog and CoEs.
- It will also include NITI Aayog as a knowledge partner. "Leveraging their skilling platform Future Skills, Nasscom and NITI Aayog will together accelerate innovation and cultivate skilling in India,".
- The CoE initiative is a nationwide programme on innovation, focusing on solutions in smart manufacturing, automotive, healthcare, agriculture, energy, IoT, banking and financial services, retail, telecom, and host of emerging technologies.
- Nasscom has partnered with Intel and IBM as its founding members and technology advisors for augmenting and accelerating the data science and artificial Intelligence ecosystem in the country.
- The center aims to "support SMBs, by fast-tracking their product development, provide market access to enterprises and assist them by co-creating programs along with other industry partners and start-ups to solve complex and real-world business problems."

### **NASSCOM**

- The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) is a trade association of Indian Information Technology (IT) and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry.
- Established in 1988, NASSCOM is a non-profit organisation.
- NASSCOM is a global trade body with over 2000 members, of which over 250 are companies from China, EU, Japan, the U.S. and the UK. NASSCOM's member companies are in the business of software development, software services, software products, IT-enabled/BPO services and E-commerce.
- NASSCOM facilitates business and trade in software and services and encourages the advancement of research in software technology.
- It is registered under the Indian Societies Act, 1860.

- NASSCOM is headquartered in New Delhi, India, with regional offices in the cities of Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kochi, Kolkata, Mumbai, Pune and Thiruvananthapuram.

### **ALTERNATIVE CEREALS CAN SAVE WATER**

***If Indian farmers were to switch from growing rice and wheat to 'alternative cereals,' such as maize, sorghum, and millet, it could reduce the demand for irrigation water by 33%. This could also improve nutritional availability to consumers, according to an analysis by researchers from the U.S.-based Earth Institute, Columbia University and Indian School of Business, Hyderabad.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- For their analysis, the scientists considered water as well as cereal-production data from 1996-2009. Because actual water consumption data was not available, they used a proxy — Crop Water Requirement (CWR), which is the product of the water required by a crop and the harvested area — to calculate water consumption in every district in this period.
- In this time, cereal production grew by 230%. Although the combined production of alternative cereals was larger than that of wheat in the 1960s, their relative contribution to the cereal supply has steadily dwindled.
- Yet, alternative cereals disproportionately account for the supply of protein, iron, and zinc among kharif crops.
- At the same time, total CWR demand for Indian cereal production increased from 482 to 632 km<sup>3</sup> per year during the study period.
- This increase has been driven almost entirely by a doubling of consumptive blue water demand (refers to water extracted from irrigation) for wheat during the rabi season and modest increases in cropping frequencies and cropland extent.
- Not surprisingly, the largest increases in consumptive water demand occurred in Punjab and Haryana.
- The nub was that rice is the least water-efficient cereal when it came to producing nutrients, and was the main driver in increasing irrigation stresses.

#### **WAY OUT**

- Replacing rice with maize, finger millet, pearl millet, or sorghum could save irrigation and improving production of nutrients such as iron by 27% and zinc by 13%. In some districts, however, the shift in cereals translated into a reduction in calorie content.
- India announced a 50% hike, or ₹ 200 per quintal, in the minimum support price for paddy — the key kharif crop — along with several other crops. Though hikes were also announced for alternative cereals, some of which were included in the analysis, the government doesn't procure these crops like it does rice and wheat. It mainly uses these procured cereals to meet obligations under the Food Security Act.
- For those eligible, India is mandated to provide 5 kg of food-grains per person per month at subsidised prices of ₹ 3/2/1 per kg for rice/wheat/coarse grains.
- Alternative cereal production can help distribute nutrient production across the country and reduce the impact of a single local climate shock to national grain production.

### **RELIEF & REHABILITATION OF MIGRANTS & REPATRIATES**

***The Union Cabinet has given its approval for continuance of the 8 existing schemes of the Ministry of Home Affairs upto March 2020 for relief and rehabilitation of migrants and repatriates under the Umbrella scheme "Relief and Rehabilitation of Migrants and Repatriates".***

**HIGHLIGHTS**

The financial implication for this purpose is Rs. 3183 crore for the period 2017-18 to 2019-20. The year-wise phasing of the scheme will be- Rs. 911 crore in 2017-18, Rs.1372 crore in 2018-19 and Rs. 900 crore in 2019-2020.

- The schemes will provide relief and rehabilitation assistance to the refugees, displaced persons, civilian victims of terrorist/communal/LWE violence and cross border firing and mine/IED blasts on Indian Territory and riot victims of various incidents etc.
- The 8 schemes approved for continuance are already in operation, and the benefits under each will be extended to intended beneficiaries in accordance with the approved criterion.
- Central Assistance for one-time settlement of displaced families from Pak Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (PoJK) and Chhamb settled in the State of Jammu & Kashmir.
- Rehabilitation Package and up-gradation of infrastructure of the Bangladeshi Enclaves and Cooch Behar District after transfer of enclaves between India and Bangladesh under Land Boundary Agreement.
- Relief assistance to Sri Lankan refugees staying in camps in Tamil Nadu and Odisha.
- Grant-in-Aid to Central Tibetan Relief Committee (CTRC) for five years for administrative and social welfare expenses of Tibetan settlements.
- Grant-in-Aid to Government of Tripura for maintenance of Brus lodged in relief camps of Tripura.
- Rehabilitation of Bru/Reang families from Tripura to Mizoram.
- Grant of enhanced relief of Rs. 5.00 lakh per deceased person, who died during 1984 Anti-Sikh Riots.
- Central Scheme for Assistance to Civilian Victims/Family of Victims of Terrorist/Communal/LWE Violence and Cross Border Firing and Mine/IED blasts on Indian Territory'.

**UN MILITARY OBSERVER GROUP IN INDIA & PAKISTAN**

***United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has appointed Major General José Eladio Alcain of Uruguayan Army as Head of Mission and Chief Military Observer for UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP). He will succeed Major General Per Gustaf Lodin of Sweden, who completed his two-year assignment.***

**UNMOGIP**

- Headquartered in Islamabad (November to April) and Srinagar (May to October)
- The first team of unarmed military observers, who eventually formed the nucleus of the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), arrived in the mission area in January 1949 to supervise, in the State of Jammu and Kashmir, the ceasefire between India and Pakistan, and to assist the Military Adviser to the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan (UNCIP), established in 1948 by Security Council resolutions 39 and 47.
- Following the India-Pakistan hostilities at the end of 1971 and a subsequent ceasefire agreement of 17 December of that year, the tasks of UNMOGIP have been to observe, to the extent possible, developments pertaining to the strict observance of the ceasefire of 17 December 1971 and to report thereon to the Secretary-General.
- Given the disagreement between India and Pakistan about UNMOGIP's mandate and functions, the Secretary-General's position has been that UNMOGIP can only be terminated by a decision of the Security Council. In the absence of such a decision, UNMOGIP has been maintained with those same arrangements since then.

- To fulfil UNMOGIP mandate, military observers conduct field tasks (area recce, field trip, field visit and observation post) along the Line of Control.
- As part of the 1949 Karachi Agreement, UNMOGIP also conducts investigations into alleged ceasefire violation complaints, which the two parties can submit to the Mission.
- The findings of the investigations are shared with the Secretary-General and a summary of investigations with the two parties.

### **PAYMENTS COUNCIL OF INDIA**

***Payments Council of India (PCI), an apex body representing companies in payments and settlement system, has a new Chairman in Vishwas Patel.***

### **PAYMENT COUNCIL OF INDIA**

- The Payments Council of India was formed under the aegis of IMAI in the year 2013 catering to the needs of the digital payment industry.
- The Council was formed inter-alia for the purposes of representing the various regulated non-banking payment industry players, to address and help resolve various industry level issues and barriers which require discussion and action.
- The council works with all its members to promote payments industry growth and to support our national goal of 'Cash to Less Cash Society' and 'Growth of Financial Inclusion' which is also the Vision Shared by the RBI and Government of India.
- PCI works closely with the regulators i.e. Reserve Bank of India (RBI), Finance Ministry and any similar government, departments, bodies or Institution to make 'India a less cash society'.

### **5<sup>TH</sup> RCEP MEET**

***The Ministers from the 16 RCEP Participating Countries (RPCs) attended the 5th RCEP Intersessional Ministerial Meeting held on 1 July 2018 in Tokyo, Japan.***

### **BACKGROUND**

The Ministers discussed the developments since the 4th RCEP Intersessional Ministerial Meeting on 3 March 2018 in Singapore, including the outcomes of the 22nd round of negotiations held on 28 April-8 May 2018 also in Singapore.

### **RCEP**

- **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** is a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (***Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam***) and the six Asia-Pacific states with which ASEAN has existing free trade agreements (***Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand***).
- RCEP negotiations were formally launched in November 2012 at the ASEAN Summit in Cambodia.
- The free trade agreement is scheduled and expected to be signed in November 2018 during the ASEAN Summit and Related Summit in Singapore, after the first RCEP summit was held on 14 November 2017 in Manila, Philippines.
- RCEP is viewed as an alternative to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a proposed trade agreement which includes several Asian and American nations but excludes China and India.

### **ONLINE COMPLIANCE SYSTEM**

***Numaligarh Refinery Ltd (NRL) in Assam has become the first oil public sector undertaking (PSU) to adopt an online legal compliance system by introducing 'Legatrix'.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- 'Legatrix' is a one stop solution for effectively managing the organisations legal and regulatory compliances through monitoring control at different levels.
- It encompasses the requirements of laws like labour, taxation, IT, commercial, export-import, corporate laws and other industry-specific laws.
- This initiative augments the NRLs contribution towards the Digital India Mission and induces greater transparency in its operations.

#### **KALIDAS AWARD TO ANJOLIE ELA MENON**

***Artist Anjolie Ela Menon received the National Kalidas Samman in Delhi for visual arts from the Madhya Pradesh government.***

#### **KALIDAS SAMMAN**

- The Kalidas Samman is a prestigious arts award presented annually by the government of Madhya Pradesh.
- This award is named after Kalidasa, a renowned Classical Sanskrit writer, widely regarded as the greatest poet and dramatist in the Sanskrit language.
- It was first awarded in 1980.
- It was awarded in the fields of Classical Music, Classical Dance, Theatre and Plastic Arts.
- The award is presented for outstanding achievement in one of the four categories.

#### **FACTS**

- **'Sambal' scheme:** It is a power bill waiver scheme and subsidised power scheme for labourers and poor families launched by the Madhya Pradesh Government. Under the scheme, the Below Poverty Line (BPL) families would be provided electricity at a cost of 200 rupees per month. The objective of this scheme to make sure that all the households have power facility in the state.
- UNESCO has entered into an agreement with Andhra Pradesh Economic Development Board (APEDB) to establish a **'Gaming Digital Learning Hub'** in Vishakhapatnam. The Design University for Gaming will help UNSECO to develop edu-tech gaming in state, with the target of providing 50,000 jobs in 10 years.
- **"NO-FIRST-USE" POLICY:** India is committed to a 'No-First-Use' policy as part of its nuclear doctrine. Thus, second strike capability - the capability to strike back after being hit by nuclear weapons first becomes important.
- The National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) and South Korean Small and Medium Business Corporation (SMC) inaugurated the India-Korea Technology Exchange Centre in an effort to boost bilateral cooperation between the two countries in the Micro, Medium and Small Enterprises (MSME) segment.
- India's leading gymnasts Dipa Karmakar created history by becoming first Indian gymnast to win gold medal in the vault event of FIG Artistic Gymnastic World Challenge Cup at Mersin, Turkey. This is her first medal in World Challenge Cup.
- Satyarup Siddhanta has become second Indian mountaineer after Malli Mastan Babu to climb Mt Ojos del Salado (6893 m), the highest volcano in the world on Argentina-Chile border.

- The Union Cabinet approved proposal of renaming Agartala Airport in Tripura as 'Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Kishore Airport, Agartala. The decision comes in the wake of long pending demand of people of Tripura as well as Government of Tripura for paying tribute to Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Kishore.
- **RAVINDRA H DHOLAKIA COMMITTEE:** The government has set up a 13-member committee to upgrade the norms for computation of economic data at states and districts level in the backdrop of plans to revise the base year for National Accounts or GDP calculation. The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI) will change the base year to 2017-18 for the calculation of GDP and IIP numbers from the current 2011-12 with an aim to capture changes in the economy.