

**CURRENT AFFAIRS****16<sup>TH</sup> TO 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2018****INDIA'S SECOND BIENNIAL UPDATE REPORT**

*The Union Cabinet has approved Submission of India's second Biennial Update Report (BUR) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change towards fulfilment of the reporting obligation under the Convention.*

**BACKGROUND**

The scope of BUR is to provide an update to India's first BUR to UNFCCC.

The BUR contains five major components **National Circumstances; National Greenhouse Gas Inventory; Mitigation Actions; Finance, Technology and Capacity Building Needs and Support Received and Domestic Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) arrangements.**

BUR has been prepared based on a range of studies conducted at the national level.

**UNFCC**

- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) is an international environmental treaty opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro.
- The UNFCCC objective is to "stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system".
- The framework sets non-binding limits on greenhouse gas emissions for individual countries and contains no enforcement mechanisms.
- Instead, the framework outlines how specific international treaties (called "protocols" or "Agreements") may be negotiated to specify further action towards the objective of the UNFCCC.

**COASTAL REGULATION ZONE (CRZ) NOTIFICATION 2018**

*The Union Cabinet has approved the Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification, 2018 which was last reviewed and issued in 2011, with periodic amendments to some clauses.*

**SIGNIFICANCE**

The proposed CRZ Notification, 2018 will lead to enhanced activities in the coastal regions thereby promoting economic growth while also respecting the conservation principles of coastal regions.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- As per CRZ, 2011 Notification, for **CRZ-II** (Urban) areas, Floor Space Index (FSI) or the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) had been frozen as per 1991 Development Control Regulation (DCR) levels. In the CRZ, 2018 Notification, it has been decided to de-freeze the same and permit FSI for construction projects, as prevailing on the date of the new Notification. This will enable redevelopment of these areas to meet the emerging needs.
- For CRZ-III (Rural) areas, two separate categories have now been stipulated as below:
  - a) **CRZ-III A** - These are densely populated rural areas with a population density of 2161 per square kilometre as per 2011 Census. Such areas shall have a No Development Zone (NDZ) of

50 meters from the HTL as against 200 meters from the High Tide Line stipulated in the CRZ Notification, 2011 since such areas have similar characteristics as urban areas.

- b) **CRZ-III B** - Rural areas with population density of below 2161 per square kilometre as per 2011 Census. Such areas shall continue to have an NDZ of 200 meters from the HTL.

Sea change	
Coastal zone rules, 2011	Coastal zone rules, 2018
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No development in CRZ-1, the most ecologically sensitive zone, except for defence, strategic purposes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eco-tourism activities such as mangrove walks, tree huts and nature trails, among others, in identified stretches, subject to permissions</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The 500-metre CRZ is apportioned into 4 subdivisions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are now further subdivisions within these 4 regions. For instance, the CRZ-1 is split into CRZ-1a and CRZ-1b and CRZ-3 has 3a and 3b</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coastal Regulation Zone shall apply to the land between high tide line to 100 metres on landward side of creeks, estuaries, rivers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CRZ shall apply to the land area between high tide line to 50 mts on the landward side of creeks, estuaries, backwaters and rivers</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• States have no discretion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 50 metre-limit after approval of State</li> </ul>



- **Temporary tourism facilities** such as shacks, toilet blocks, change rooms, drinking water facilities etc. have now been permitted in Beaches. Such temporary tourism facilities are also now permissible in the "**No Development Zone**" (**NDZ**) of the CRZ-III areas as per the Notification. However, a minimum distance of 10 m from HTL should be maintained for setting up of such facilities.
- The procedure for CRZ clearances has been streamlined. Only such projects/activities, which are located in **the CRZ-I (Ecologically Sensitive Areas) and CRZ IV (area covered between Low Tide Line and 12 Nautical Miles seaward)** shall be dealt with for CRZ clearance by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change. The powers for clearances with respect to CRZ-II and III have been delegated at the State level with necessary guidance.
- For islands close to the main land coast and for all Backwater Islands in the main land, in wake of space limitations and unique geography of such regions, bringing uniformity in treatment of such regions, **NDZ of 20 m** has been stipulated.
- All **Ecologically Sensitive Areas** have been accorded special importance.
- **Pollution abatement** has been accorded special focus: In order to address pollution in Coastal areas treatment facilities have been made permissible activities in CRZ-I B area subject to necessary safeguards.
- Defence and strategic projects have been accorded necessary dispensation.

**BACKGROUND**

With the objective of conservation and protection of the coastal environment, Ministry of Environment and Forest and Climate Change notified the Coastal Regulation Zone Notification in

1991, which was subsequently revised in 2011. The notification was amended from time to time based on representations received.

The **Shailesh Nayank Committee** held wide ranging consultations with State Governments and other stakeholders and submitted its recommendations in 2015.

### **POCSO ACT, 2012**

***The Union Cabinet approved the proposal for Amendment in the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 to make punishment more stringent for committing sexual crimes against children.***

#### **BACKGROUND**

The POCSO Act, 2012 was enacted to Protect the Children from Offences of Sexual Assault, Sexual harassment and pornography with due regard for safeguarding the interest and well-being of children.

The Act defines a ***child as any person below eighteen years of age, and regards the best interests and welfare of the child as matter of paramount importance at every stage, to ensure the healthy physical, emotional, intellectual and social development of the child.*** The act is gender neutral.

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The amendment in **Section-4, Section-5, Section-6, Section-9, Section-14, Section-15 and Section-42** of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, is made to address the aspects of child sexual abuse in appropriate manner. The modification is made to address the need for stringent measures required to deter the rising trend of child sex abuse in the country.
- To discourage the trend of child sexual abuse by acting as a deterrent **Section-4, Section-5 and Section-6** are proposed to be amended to provide option of stringent punishment, including death penalty, for committing aggravated penetrative sexual assault crime on a child to protect the children from sexual abuse.
- The amendments are also proposed in section-9 to protect children from sexual offences in times of natural calamities and disasters and in cases where children are administered, in any way, any hormone or any chemical substance, to attains early sexual maturity for the purpose of penetrative sexual assault.
- **Section-14 and Section-15** of the POCSO Act, 2012 are also proposed to be amended to address the menace of the child pornography. It is proposed to levy fine for not destroying/or deleting/ or reporting the pornographic material involving a child.

### **ICDS-CAS**

***Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) common application software as on 31st November, 2018, has been rolled-out in 64 districts across 9 States/UTs.***

- ICDS-CAS Software enables the identification of malnourished children based on auto-plotting of Growth Charts.
- The drill-down dashboard available at National, State, District, Block level enables timely identification and interventions to address the problem of under-nutrition.

**ICDS:** Launched on 2nd October, 1975, the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme is one of the flagship programmes of the Government of India and represents one of the world's largest and unique programmes for early childhood care and development.

- It is the foremost symbol of country's commitment to its children and nursing mothers, as a response to the challenge of providing pre-school non-formal education on one hand and breaking the vicious cycle of malnutrition, morbidity, reduced learning capacity and mortality on the other.
- The beneficiaries under the Scheme are children in the age group of 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers.
- Objectives of the Scheme are:
  1. To improve the nutritional and health status of children in the age-group 0-6 years.
  2. To lay the foundation for proper psychological, physical and social development of the child.
  3. To reduce the incidence of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and school dropout.
  4. To achieve effective co-ordination of policy and implementation amongst the various departments to promote child development.
  5. To enhance the capability of the mother to look after the normal health and nutritional needs of the child through proper nutrition and health education.
- The ICDS Scheme offers a package of six services, viz.
  1. Supplementary Nutrition.
  2. Pre-school non-formal education.
  3. Nutrition & health education.
  4. Immunization.
  5. Health check-up.
  6. Referral services.

The last three services are related to health and are provided by Ministry/Department of Health and Family Welfare through NRHM & Health system.

#### JUVENILE JUSTICE ACT, 2015

***As per the report submitted by the States / UTs (as on 18.09.2018), 539 institutions were closed on account of non-compliance of provisions of Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 as found by inspection committee during inspections.***

#### HIGHLIGHTS

- The Ministry had commissioned a mapping exercise to ascertain the number of **Child Care Institutions (CCIs)** in 2015. As per the report of mapping, out of 9589 homes covered, only 3071 homes were found to be registered under the JJ Act, 2015.
- The **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR)** has been directed to conduct the social audit of all CCIs in the country.
- As regards women shelter homes, the provision has been made in the **Swadhar Greh** guidelines in 2018 that the State Government should ensure to conduct Social Audit with regard to the implementation of the **Swadhar Greh Scheme**.

**SWADHAR GREH SCHEME**

The Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing the Swadhar Greh Scheme which targets the women victims of difficult circumstances who are in need of institutional support for rehabilitation so that they could lead their life with dignity.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Under the Scheme, Swadhar Greh will be set up in every district with capacity of 30 women.
- For big cities and other districts having more than 40 lakh population or those districts where there is a need for additional support to the women, more than one Swadhar Greh could be established.
- The capacity of Swadhar Greh could be expanded up to 50 or 100 on the basis of need assessment and other important parameters.
- The benefit of the component could be availed by women above 18 years of age of the following categories:
  1. Women who are deserted and are without any social and economic support.
  2. Women survivors of natural disasters who have been rendered homeless and are without any social and economic support.
  3. Women prisoners released from jail and are without family, social and economic support.
  4. Women victims of domestic violence, family tension or discord, who are made to leave their homes without any means of subsistence and have no special protection from exploitation and/ or facing litigation on account of marital disputes.
  5. Trafficked women/girls rescued or runaway from brothels or other places where they face exploitation and Women affected by HIV/AIDS who do not have any social or economic support. However, such women/ girls should first seek assistance under UJJAWALA Scheme in areas where it is in operation.
- Women affected by domestic violence could stay up to one year.
- For other categories of women, the maximum period of stay could be up to 3 years.
- The older women above the 55 years of age may be accommodated for maximum period of 5 years after which they will have to shift to old age homes or similar institutions.
- Swadhar Greh facilities could also be availed by the children accompanying women in the above categories.
- Girls up to the age of 18 years and boys up to the age of 8 years would be allowed to stay in the Swadhar Greh with their mothers. (Boys of more than 8 years of age need to be shifted to the Children Homes run under JJ Act/ICPS.)

**NIMZ**

***So far, three NIMZs namely Prakasam (Andhra Pradesh), Sangareddy (Telangana) and Kalinganagar (Odisha) have been accorded final approval and 13 NIMZs have been accorded in-principle approval. Besides these, eight Investment Regions along the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) project have also been declared as NIMZs.***

**NIMZ**

- **National Investment & Manufacturing Zones (NIMZs)** are one of the important instruments of National Manufacturing Policy, 2011.

- NIMZs are envisaged as large areas of developed land with the requisite eco-system for promoting world class manufacturing activity.
- The main objective of Special Economic Zones is promotion of exports, while NIMZs are based on the principle of industrial growth in partnership with States and focuses on manufacturing growth and employment generation.
- NIMZs are different from SEZs in terms of size, level of infrastructure planning, governance structures related to regulatory procedures, and exit policies.

### **FEATURES**

- National Investment and Manufacturing Zones (NIMZ) equipped with world-class infrastructure that would be autonomous and self-regulated developed in partnership with the private sector.
- Each National Investment and Manufacturing Zones to have 5,000 hectares.
- Land will be selected by State Governments. Preference would be given to uncultivable land.
- Both state and central Government would fund trunk infrastructure.
- The policy embodies an easy exit policy and single window clearance in zones.
- The NIMZ would be managed by special entity.
- The policy has envisaged fiscal sops to boost manufacturing.
- Small & medium enterprises to be reimbursed for technology purchase.
- Flexible labor laws and simplified & expeditious exit mechanism for sick units.
- Relaxation in environmental regulations.
- Financial and tax incentives to small and medium enterprises.
- Incentives to states for infrastructure development Incentives for Green Manufacturing.
- Rationalization of business regulations to reduce burden of procedural and regulatory compliance on businesses.
- Increased focus on employment intensive industries, capital goods industry, industries with strategic significance and those in which India enjoys a competitive edge and the SME sector.

### **NEIDS SCHEME**

***North East Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS), 2017 covers eligible industrial units in the manufacturing and service sectors Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim to promote industrialization and boost employment and income generation. The Scheme is valid from 01.04.2017 to 31.03.2022.***

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

The scheme provides:

- Central Capital Investment Incentive (30% of the investment in plant & machinery with an upper limit of Rs. 5 crore).
- Central Interest Incentive (3% interest on working capital for 5 years).
- Central Comprehensive Insurance Incentive (Reimbursement of 100% insurance premium for 5 years).
- Income Tax Reimbursement of centre's share for 5 years.
- GST reimbursement of Central Govt. share of CGST & IGST for 5 years.
- Employment Incentive under which additional 3.67% of the employer's contribution to EPF in addition to Govt. bearing 8.33% Employee Pension Scheme (EPS) contribution of the employer in PMRPY.

- Transport incentive on finished goods movement by Railways (20% cost of the transportation), by Inland Waterways Authority (20% of the cost of transportation) & by air (33% of cost transportation of air freight) from the station/port/airport nearest to unit to the station/port/airport nearest to the destination point.
- Also, under this scheme, a single unit can avail overall benefits up to Rs. 200 Crores.
- The Scheme does not envisage sanction of projects, rather, eligible units are registered after following due process.

### NATIONAL IPR POLICY

***The Union Cabinet has approved the National Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Policy on 12th May, 2016 that shall lay the future roadmap for IPRs in India.***

The Policy recognizes that India has a well-established **TRIPS-compliant legislative**, administrative and judicial framework to safeguard IPRs, which meets its international obligations while utilizing the flexibilities provided in the international regime to address its developmental concerns. It reiterates India's commitment to the **Doha Development Agenda and the TRIPS agreement**.

#### **OBJECTIVES**

1. IPR Awareness: Outreach and Promotion - To create public awareness about the economic, social and cultural benefits of IPRs among all sections of society.
2. Generation of IPRs - To stimulate the generation of IPRs.
3. Legal and Legislative Framework - To have strong and effective IPR laws, which balance the interests of rights owners with larger public interest.
4. Administration and Management - To modernize and strengthen service-oriented IPR administration.
5. Commercialization of IPRs - Get value for IPRs through commercialization.
6. Enforcement and Adjudication - To strengthen the enforcement and adjudicatory mechanisms for combating IPR infringements.
7. Human Capital Development - To strengthen and expand human resources, institutions and capacities for teaching, training, research and skill building in IPRs.

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM): A Cell CIPAM shall be created as a professional body under aegis of DIPP to address the 7 identified objectives of the Policy. It will coordinate with agencies at State level and with the various Ministries/ Departments of the Union Government. The data generated at CIPAM shall serve as a valuable resource for future policy.
- Awareness Campaign.
- IP Cells: IP cells shall be created in key Ministries/ Departments of the Govt of India, which are vital the field of IPRs, as well as in State Governments, Industry associations and clusters and major academic institutions. CIPAM shall coordinate with the Cells.
- Generation, registration and commercialization: The Policy aims to encourage creativity and innovation, leading to generation of IPs and their protection through IPRs.
- Registration of Geographical Indications (GIs) shall be encouraged through support institutions. Action shall be taken to encourage R&D as well as to improve IPR output from Govt laboratories and organizations, with special focus on national priority areas.

- Apart from creation of IPRs, for their effective commercialisation, it is essential to Identify opportunities for marketing Indian IPR-based products, especially GIs, and services to a global audience
- Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL): TKDL's ambit is to be expanded to include other fields besides Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani & Siddha.
- A detailed review of IPR Policy shall be undertaken every five years. Continuous and regular Review will be done by a Committee to be constituted for this purpose under the Secretary, DIPP.

### **GRAM PARIVAHAN YOJANA**

***The Ministry is implementing Aajeevika Grameen Express Yojana (AGEY), the sub-scheme under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) to facilitate transport facilities in the rural areas and also provide job opportunities to members of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) under DAY-NRLM.***

The scheme was launched in August, 2017. However, the Ministry does not have a scheme called Gram Parivahan Yojana.

#### **AGEY OBJECTIVES**

- To provide safe, affordable and community monitored rural transport services to connect remote villages with key services and amenities (including access to markets, education and health) for the overall economic development of the area by making use of the supports available within the framework of DAY-NRLM.
- To provide an alternative source of livelihoods to members of Self Help Groups (SHGs) and their families under DAY-NRLM by facilitating them to operate public transport services in backward rural areas, as identified by the States.

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- AGEY was to be implemented in 250 blocks across the country on a pilot basis. Rajasthan was allocated 9 blocks under AGEY. The responsibility of identifying the blocks lies with the State government.
- There is no separate budgetary allocation under AGEY.
- Under the programme, the Community Investment Fund (CIF) provided to Community Based Organisations (CBOs) under the existing provisions of DAY-NRLM are utilised for providing interest free loans to the SHG members.
- AGEY is already under implementation in 18 States.
- AGEY aims to provide connectivity to rural areas through vehicles operated by SHG members. State Rural Livelihoods Missions (SRLMs) in consultation with Community Based Organisations (CBOs) under DAY – NRLM identify routes where roads have been constructed under Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) but has poor transport services.
- SHG members are then provided interest free loans by the CBOs for operating vehicles on the identified routes based on financial viability.

### **PRADHAN MANTRI KRISHI SINCHAYEE YOJANA (PMKSY)**

***The funds are released to the State Governments under PMKSY as and when eligible proposals are received from them.***

**PMKSY**

**Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) comprises of various components viz:**

- a) Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP), PMKSY –Har Khet Ko Pani (HKKP) including Command Area Development (CAD).
- b) Surface-Minor Irrigation (SMI) and Repair, Renovation and Restoration (RRR) of Water Bodies.
- c) PMKSY - Per Drop More Crop (PDMC).
- d) PMKSY - Watershed Development (WD).

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- PM Krishi Sinchayee Yojana with an outlay of Rs.50,000 crores for a period of 5 years (2015-16 to 2019-20) is to achieve convergence of investments in irrigation at the field level.
- PMKSY has been formulated amalgamating ongoing schemes viz. Accelerated Irrigation Benefit Programme (AIBP) of Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation; Integrated Watershed Management Programme (IWMP) of Department of Land Resources; and On Farm Water Management (OFWM) component of National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) of Department of Agriculture and Cooperation.
- PMKSY is to be implemented in an area development approach, adopting decentralized state level planning and projectized execution, allowing the states to draw their irrigation development plans based on district/blocks plans with a horizon of 5 to 7 years.
- All the States and Union Territories including North Eastern States are covered under the programme.
- The National Steering Committee (NSC) of PMKSY under the chairmanship of Hon'ble Prime Minister, will provide policy direction to programme framework and a National Executive Committee (NEC) under the chairmanship of Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog will oversee the programme implementation at national level.
- Provision has been made under PMKSY during 2015-16 for carrying out extension activities in the field with special focus on water harvesting, water management and crop alignment for farmers and grass root level field functionaries.

**KHELO INDIA SCHEME**

***The revamped Khelo India Scheme was launched during the financial year 2017-18 to 2019-20 with a view to achieving the twin objectives of mass participation and promotion of excellence in sports.***

The revamped Khelo India Programme would impact the entire sports ecosystem, including infrastructure, community sports, talent identification, coaching for excellence, competition structure and sports economy.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- It is an unprecedented Pan Indian Sports Scholarship scheme, which would cover 1,000 most talented young athletes each year across select sports disciplines.
- Each athlete selected under the scheme shall receive an annual scholarship worth Rs. 5.00 lakh for 8 consecutive years.

- The Programme aims to promote 20 universities across the country as hubs of sporting excellence, which would enable talented sports persons to pursue the dual pathway of education and competitive sports.
- The Programme would cover about 200 million children in the age group of 10-18 under a massive national physical fitness drive, which will not only measure the physical fitness of all children in the age group, but also support their fitness related activities.

#### **SWACHCH BHARAT GRAND CHALLENGE AWARDS**

***As part of the Swachhta Pakhwada held from 1st to 15th November, 2018, Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) organized a Swachch Bharat Grand Challenge.***

- This was organized to reward innovative solutions by DIPP recognized Start-ups in the country.
- Four areas of **sanitation, waste management, water and wastewater management and air management** were selected for the grand challenge.

#### **"WATAN KO JANO"**

***The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has been organising programme "Watan ko Jano" to give exposure to the youth and children of J&K about the cultural and socio-economic development taking place in other parts of the country.***

- Youth and children hit by militancy and from weaker sections of the society have been identified for the purpose.
- Organized by the Department of J&K Affairs, MHA in association with J&K State Rehabilitation Council, Social Welfare Department, the group of 244 students from Classes 1 to 12, including 46 girls, representing all 22 districts of the state, and escorted by 23 teachers, are on a 10-day visit to Delhi and Lucknow.

#### **EKLAVYA MODEL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS (EMRSs)**

***The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its in-principle approval for setting up of Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs) in every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- There will be an Autonomous Society under the Ministry of Tribal Affairs similar to Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti to run the EMRSs.
- Upgradation of already sanctioned EMRSs on need basis with unit cost subject to a maximum of Rs. 5 crore per school.
- Ministry of Tribal Affairs has recognised 163 priority districts having 25% or more Scheduled Tribe (ST) population for implementation of tribal development programmes including establishment of Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs).
- Across the country, as per census 2011 figures, there are 564 sub-districts, i.e. blocks/taluka/tehsils, having more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons.
- As per the budget 2018-19, every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons, will have an Eklavya Model Residential School by the year 2022.

**PROJECT MAUSAM**

- **Project 'Mausam'** is the initiative of Ministry of Culture to be implemented by the **Archaeological Survey of India (ASI)** as the nodal agency with research support of the **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)** and National Museum as associate bodies.
- This project aims to explore the multi-faceted Indian Ocean 'world' – collating archaeological and historical research in order to document the diversity of cultural, commercial and religious interactions in the Indian Ocean.
- The main objective of the project is to inscribe places and sites identified under Project Mausam as trans-national nomination for inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

**MONUMENT FORTS OF DECCAN SULTANATE**

*At present, India has 42 sites listed under tentative list which is pre-requisite condition for inscription as World Heritage Sites.*

*In this year, 'The Walled city of Jaipur' is under process for nomination of World Heritage Site. The dossier on 'Monuments Forts of Deccan Sultanate' has been submitted to UNESCO for 2019-20 initiative.*

At present, India has 37 World Heritage Sites.

**Cultural (29)**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Agra Fort (1983)   | 17. Humayun's Tomb, Delhi (1993)  |
| 2. Ajanta Caves (1983)  | 18. Khajuraho Group of Monuments (1986)   |
| 3. Archaeological Site of Nalanda Mahavihara at Nalanda, Bihar (2016) | 19. Mahabodhi Temple Complex at Bodhi Gaya (2002)   |
| 4. Buddhist Monuments at Sanchi (1989)                                | 20. Mountain Railways of India (1999,2005,2008)   |
| 5. Champaner-Pavagadh Archaeological Park (2004)                      | 21. Qutb Minar and its Monuments, Delhi (1993)  |
| 6. Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus (formerly Victoria Terminus) (2004)   | 22. Rani-ki-Vav (the Queen's Stepwell) at Patan, Gujarat (2014)                                       |
| 7. Churches and Convents of Goa (1986)                                | 23. Red Fort Complex (2007)   |
| 8. Elephanta Caves (1987)   | 24. Rock Shelters of Bhimbetka (2003)   |
| 9. Ellora Caves (1983)  | 25. Sun Temple, Konârak (1984)  |
| 10. Fatehpur Sikri (1986)   | 26. Taj Mahal (1983)  |
| 11. Great Living Chola Temples (1987,2004)                            | 27. The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier, an Outstanding Contribution to the Modern Movement (2016) |
| 12. Group of Monuments at Hampi (1986)                                | 28. The Jantar Mantar, Jaipur (2010)  |
| 13. Group of Monuments at Mahabalipuram (1984)                        | 29. Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensembles of Mumbai (2018)  |
| 14. Group of Monuments at Pattadakal (1987)                           |   |
| 15. Hill Forts of Rajasthan (2013)                                    |   |
| 16. Historic City of Ahmadabad (2017)                                 |   |

**Natural (7)**

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| 1. Great Himalayan National Park Conservation Area (2014) | 3. Keoladeo National Park (1985)   |
| 2. Kaziranga National Park (1985)                         | 4. Manas Wildlife Sanctuary (1985) |

5. Nanda Devi and Valley of Flowers National Parks (1988,2005)
6. Sundarbans National Park (1987)
7. Western Ghats (2012)

#### **Mixed (1)**

Khangchendzonga National Park (2016).

#### **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR TAGORE CULTURAL COMPLEXES**

*The Ministry of Culture administers Central Sector Scheme (CSS) component namely “Financial Assistance for Tagore Cultural Complexes (TCC)” under “Scheme of Financial Assistance for creation of Cultural infrastructure”.*

- The Ministry provides Central Financial Assistance to State Govt./UTs, Central/State Govt. agencies/bodies, Universities, Municipal Corporations, reputed not- for-profit organizations etc. for construction of Tagore Cultural Complexes in various parts of the country under the scheme.
- As per the existing guidelines of the scheme, under normal circumstances a project is required to be completed within a period of three years from the date of award of the project.

#### **Scheme of Financial Assistance for creation of Cultural infrastructure**

Rs. 37 Crore allocated for “Scheme of Financial Assistance for Creation of Cultural Infrastructure” for 2018-19 by Cultural Ministry.

The Scheme has the following two components:-

1. Component-I: Financial Assistance for Building Grants including Studio Theatres.
  2. Component-II: Financial Assistance for Tagore Cultural Complexes (TCC).
- The implementing agency of the projects under the Scheme at State/UT level is State Govt./UT Administration or the applicant not-for-profit cultural organizations etc.
  - Ministry of Culture releases the grant to eligible projects recommended by the Expert Committee constituted under the Scheme.

#### **IMPRESS SCHEME**

*The Government has approved “Revitalising Infrastructure and Systems in Education by 2022”, as per which the scope of institutions to be funded through Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA) has been enlarged to encompass School Education and Medical Education institutions, apart from Higher Education.*

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The total authorized equity capital of HEFA has been raised to Rs.10,000 crore, with the facility to leverage additional resources from the market, based on requirement.
- A total Government equity of Rs. 6,000 Crore, has been approved.
- All funds for educational infrastructure in centrally funded educational institutions will henceforth be in the form of ten-year loans through HEFA to the institution, the interest liability of which would be borne by the Government.
- The principal repayment would be undertaken by the institutions in part or full depending on their age profile and financial capability.

- For new institutions and those which have limited internal fund generating capacity, the entire principal and interest repayment would be undertaken by the Government.
- There is an additional window of financing for school and medical education institutions where the sponsoring Department would undertake to repay the principal and interest to HEFA.

### **BACKGROUND**

- The Government of India, in August 2018, had sanctioned the scheme “**Impactful Policy Research in Social Sciences (IMPRESS)**” at a total cost of Rs. 414 Cr for implementation up to 31.03.2021.
- Under the Scheme, 1500 research projects will be awarded for 2 years to support the social science research in the higher educational institutions and to enable research to guide policy making.
- The Indian Council of Social Science and Research (ICSSR) will be the project implementing agency.
- There will be a regular monitoring of the progress of projects using the online portal, in which the progress can be directly updated by the Project Coordinator.
- There will be a third party evaluation of the projects in March 2021.

### **SCHOLARSHIP SCHEMES FOR NORTH-EAST STUDENT**

*Ishan Vikas and Ishan Uday schemes are being implemented for the students of North Eastern region.*

#### **ISHAN VIKAS**

- Ishan Vikas is coordinated by Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Guwahati and under the programme, selected school children from North Eastern States are brought in close contact with the Indian Institute of Technology (IITs), Indian Institutes of Science Education and Research (IISERs) and National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS).
- **OBJECTIVES:** to motivate them to pursue science, technology, engineering and mathematics and to facilitate internship opportunities for the engineering college students in various institutes of national importance.
- Annual target is to provide visit of 96 school children to premier institutes and summer internships to 250 engineering students. Rs. 605.45 lakhs has been approved for the programme.

#### **ISHAN UDAY**

- Ishan Uday Scholarship Scheme is administered by University Grants Commission (UGC).
- Under the scheme, scholarship is provided to the students having parental income upto Rs. 4.5 lakh per annum, from the North East Region for pursuing general degree, technical and professional degree courses including medical and para-medical courses.
- The target of beneficiaries under the scheme is 10,000 per year.
- Rate of scholarship under the scheme is, Rs. 5400/- per month for general degree course and Rs. 7800/- per month for technical/medical/professional/paramedical courses.

### **E-EDUCATION**

**The key e-Learning Projects being run by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) are as follows:**

**E-PATHSHALA:**

e-pathshala has been developed by NCERT (National Council for Educational Research and Training) for showcasing and disseminating all educational e-resources including textbooks, audio, video, periodicals and a variety of other print and non-print materials.

**SHAGUN PORTAL:**

A web portal called ShaGun (from the words **Shaala and Gunvatta**) which has two parts, one of which is a Repository of good practices, photographs, videos, studies, newspaper articles etc on school education, State /UT wise has been developed which is in public domain. Its purpose is to showcase success stories and also to provide a platform for all stakeholders to learn from each other. This also instills a positive competitive spirit among all the States and UTs.

**NATIONAL REPOSITORY OF OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (NROER):**

The National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER) is an initiative to bring together all digital and digitizable resources across all stages of school education and teacher education.

**SWAYAM:**

The '**Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds' (SWAYAM)** an integrated platform for online courses, using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and covering school (9th to 12th) to Post Graduate Level.

- SWAYAM provides one integrated platform and portal for online courses, using information and communication technology (ICT) and covering all higher education subjects and skill sector courses to ensure that every student in the country has access to the best quality higher education at affordable cost.
- It also offers online courses for students, teachers and teacher educators.
- Besides, National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) is promoting education through e-learning methods by providing courses on Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) on the portal.
- There are 44 courses of NIOS offered on SWAYAM platform – 14 at secondary level, 16 at senior secondary level, 4 vocational courses and 10 courses of Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed.).

**SWAYAM PRABHA:**

A programme for utilization of satellite communication technologies for transmission of educational e-contents through 32 National Channels i.e. SWAYAM PRABHA DTH-TV has been launched.

- CIET-NCERT is the national coordinator for one DTH TV channel i.e., Kishore Manch (#31) and has started feeding a 24x7 educational TV channel w.e.f. 09.07.2018.
- Everyday four hours fresh slot is telecast and repeated 5 more times in 24 hours to provide learning opportunities for the stake holders, as per their convenience.
- Besides, NIOS is running 5 channels for teachers, for secondary and senior secondary levels and for sign language.

**NATIONAL DIGITAL LIBRARY (NDL):**

The National Digital Library of India (NDL) is a project to develop a framework of virtual repository of learning resources with a single-window search facility.

**BHASHA SANGAM PROGRAM**

*The Department of School Education & Literacy has initiated Bhasha Sangam – A Celebration of Linguistic Diversity which marks the appreciation of the unique symphony of languages of our country, from 20th November to 21st December, 2018.*

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Bhasha Sangam provides an opportunity to schools and educational institution (BIETS, DIETs, CTEs/IASEs, SCERTs, SIEs, School Boards, Directorates of School Education, etc.) to provide multilingual exposure to students in Indian Languages.
- The objective is to familiarize every child with simple dialogues in all the 22 languages under Schedule VIII of the Constitution of India, taking up one language on each working day, to enhance linguistic tolerance and promote national integration.
- The initiative has been widely received and accepted by States and UTs in very positive manner and schools are introducing five simple and commonly used sentences as per their convenience without any additional load on school students.
- **Section 29(2)(F) of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009** states that “medium of instruction shall, as far as practicable, be in child’s mother tongue”.
- The **National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005** emphasises the importance of imparting primary education in the mother tongue of the child.
- Since education is in the Concurrent List, States have the liberty to decide the medium of instruction in schools.
- The NCF also states that the ‘**Three Language Formula**’ is an attempt to address the challenges and opportunities of the linguistic situation in India.
- As per the ‘**Three Language Formula**’ the first language to be studied, must be the mother tongue or the regional language. In non-Hindi – speaking States, children learn Hindi. In the case of Hindi speaking States, children learn a language not spoken in their area. Sanskrit may also be studied as a modern Indian language in addition to these languages.

*The Bhasha Sangam initiative under the ‘Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat’ aims to make the students aware about the unique cultural, ethnic and linguistic diversity of our country.*

**PRADHAN MANTRI KAUSHAL VIKAS YOJANA**

*Under Skill India Mission, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship is implementing a flagship scheme known as Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY).*

**OBJECTIVE:** To provide skilling to one crore people under Short Term Training (STT), Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Special Project (SP) across the country for over four years i.e. 2016-2020.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) 2016-20 has two components known as Centrally Sponsored Centrally Managed (CSCM) being implemented by National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and Centrally Sponsored State Managed (CSSM) being implemented by State Skill Development Missions of the States/ UTs popularly known as State- Engagement Component of PMKVY (2016-20).
- PMKVY 2016-20 scheme has mandatory provisions for placement tracking.

- The placement data is reported within 90 days of certification of trained candidates on the Skill Development Management System (SDMS).

#### **PRADHAN MANTRI YUVA UDYAMITA VIKAS ABHIYAN (PM-YUVA)**

***Pradhan Mantri YUVA Yojana (Yuva Udyamita Vikas Abhiyan) is a centrally sponsored Scheme on entrepreneurship education and training being implemented by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Government of India.***

- The scheme spans over five years (2016-17 to 2020-21) with a project cost of Rs. 499.94 crore, and will provide entrepreneurship education and training to over 7 lakh students in 5 years through 3050 Institutes.
- It will also include easy access to information and mentor network, credit, incubator and accelerator and advocacy to create a pathway for the youth

#### **OBJECTIVES**

- Educate and equip potential and early stage entrepreneurs.
- Connect entrepreneurs in enabling networks of peers, mentors, funds and business services.
- Support entrepreneurs through Entrepreneurship Hubs (E - Hubs).

#### **NATIONAL MISSION FOR SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE**

***National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) has been made operational from the year 2014-15 which aims at making agriculture more productive, sustainable, remunerative and climate resilient by promoting location specific integrated /composite farming systems; soil and moisture conservation measures; comprehensive soil health management; efficient water management practices and mainstreaming rainfed technologies.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- **On Farm Water Management (OFWM)** was implemented as one of the components of NMSA during 2014-15 with the objective of enhancing water use efficiency by promoting technological interventions like drip & sprinkler technologies, efficient water application & distribution system, secondary storage etc.
- Thereafter, these activities have been subsumed under the '**Per Drop More Crop (PDMC)**' component of **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY)** during 2015-16.
- The PMKSY-PDMC mainly focuses on water use efficiency at farm level through precision/ Micro Irrigation (Drip and Sprinkler Irrigation).
- Besides, promoting precision irrigation and better on farm water management practices to optimize the use of available water resources, the component also supports **micro level water storage or water conservation /management** activities to supplement source creation.
- **Rainfed Area Development Programme** is implemented as a component under National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture since 2014-15 in the country.
- The programme focuses on **Integrated Farming System** for enhancing productivity and minimizing risks associated with climatic variability.
- Under this system, crops is integrated with activities like horticulture, livestock, fishery, vermi-organic compost, green manuring, apiculture etc. to enable farmers maximising farm returns for sustained livelihood and mitigate the impacts of drought, flood or other extreme weather events with the income opportunity from allied activities.

- **Soil Health Management (SHM)** is one of the components under National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA).
- SHM aims at promoting Integrated Nutrient Management (INM) through judicious use of chemical fertilizers including secondary and micro nutrients in conjunction with organic manures and bio fertilizers for improving soil health and its productivity, strengthening of soil and fertilizer testing facilities to improve soil test-based recommendations to farmers for improving soil fertility.

#### **ANTYODAYA ANNA YOJANA**

***As per the guidelines issued by the Government, the AAY families are to be identified by States/Union Territories (UTs) as per the following criteria:***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Landless agriculture labourers, marginal farmers, rural artisans /craftsmen, such as potters, tanners, weavers, blacksmiths, carpenters, slum dwellers and persons earning their livelihood on daily basis in the informal sector like porters, coolies, rickshaw pullers, hand cart pullers, fruit and flower sellers, snake charmers, rag pickers, cobblers, destitute and other similar categories in both rural and urban area.
- Households headed by widows or terminally ill persons/disabled persons/ persons aged 60 years or more with no assured means of subsistence or societal support.
- Widows or terminally ill persons or disabled persons or persons aged 60 years or more or single women or single men with no family or societal support or assured means of subsistence.
- All primitive tribal households.
- All eligible Below Poverty Line (BPL) families of HIV positive persons.
- Food grains under Antodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) are given family wise.

#### **GLOBAL CENTRE FOR NUCLEAR ENERGY PARTNERSHIP**

***Phase-I of the Project titled “Establishment of Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership (GCNEP)” at Kheri Jasaur, near Bahadurgarh, Haryana has been completed.***

GCNEP is the sixth R&D unit under the aegis of Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).

#### **OBJECTIVES**

- To conduct research, design and development of nuclear systems that are intrinsically safe, secure, proliferation resistant and sustainable.
- To organize training, seminars, lectures and workshops on topical issues by Indian and International experts, in order to develop a pool of trained human resource.
- To promote global nuclear energy partnership through collaborative research and training programs.
- To establish five schools specializing in the areas of-
  1. Advanced Nuclear Energy System Studies.
  2. Nuclear Security Studies.
  3. Radiation Safety Studies.
  4. Nuclear Material Characterization Studies.
  5. Application of Radioisotopes and Radiation Technology in healthcare, agriculture and food.

**E-DRISHTI SOFTWARE**

***An 'e-Drishti' interface has been unveiled for the Union Railway Minister, Minister of State and Board Members.***

- This software includes an interface which provides summary information on punctuality of trains for the previous day.
- There is also an interface which provides information on current train running on the Indian Railway network.
- In addition, there are interfaces providing details of freight earning, freight loading and passenger earnings for the previous day & month and cumulative for the year, in comparison to the corresponding period of the previous year.

**STRATEGY FOR NEW INDIA @ 75**

***The NITI Aayog unveiled its comprehensive national Strategy for New India, which defines clear objectives for 2022-23.***

It is a detailed exposition across forty-one crucial areas, that recognizes the progress already made, identifies binding constraints, and suggests the way forward for achieving the clearly stated objectives.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- The Strategy for New India @75 put together by NITI Aayog is an attempt to bring innovation, technology, enterprise and efficient management together, at the core of policy formulation and implementation. It will encourage discussion and debate, and invite feedback for further refining our policy approach.
- The overarching focus of the Strategy document is to further improve the policy environment in which private investors and other stakeholders can contribute their fullest towards achieving the goals set out for New India 2022 and propel India towards a USD 5 trillion economy by 2030.
- The forty-one chapters in the document have been disaggregated under four sections: Drivers, Infrastructure, Inclusion and Governance.
- The first section on Drivers focuses on the engines of economic performance with chapters on growth and employment, doubling of farmers' incomes; upgrading the science, technology and innovation eco-system; and promoting sunrise sectors like fintech and tourism.

**UNESCO CATEGORY 2 CENTRE**

***Union Minister for Science & Technology, Earth Sciences, Environment and Forests & Climate Change inaugurated the newly constructed International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography (ITCO- ocean) Complex in the INCOIS campus at Hyderabad.***

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- The **UNESCO Category 2 Centre** established as a training facility at **INCOIS** will give an opportunity to the South Asian and African states bordering the Indian Ocean and the small island nations in the Pacific to benefit from the expertise and experience of INCOIS in the areas of ocean science and management.

- To scale up the activities of **International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography (ITCO-ocean)**, a full-fledged facility consisting of an Academic Building and International Guest House has been constructed on the INCOIS campus.
- The **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)**, Govt. of India, had established an International Training Centre for Operational Oceanography (ITCO-ocean) at Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Hyderabad to provide training to scientists/researchers/government officers/disaster managers/decision makers, etc in 2013.
- Accordingly, ITCO-ocean started conducting short term training programmes for wide variety of participants from India and abroad.
- Later, in order to assist UNESCO and its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) in achieving the aims of developing new methods of capacity building for the countries on the Indian Ocean Rim (IOR), African countries bordering the Indian and Atlantic Oceans and small island countries, the Government of India through Ministry of Earth Sciences, offered to establish the ITCO-ocean as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre.

### **BACKGROUND**

- The General Conference of UNESCO approved the offer of Government of India to establish ITCO-ocean as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre in November 2017.
- The mission of the Centre is to assist the Member States of IOC/UNESCO in developing oceanographic scientific base, related technology and information systems and to create a pool of trained ocean scientists, technologists and managers to cater the growing demands of operational oceanographic services and better management of oceans.
- INCOIS is already playing its part as a leading operational oceanography institute in the region. Tsunami early warnings from the institute are delivered to 25 countries on the Indian Ocean Rim on real-time basis, since IOC/UNESCO designated the Centre as Regional Tsunami Service Provider (RTSP) in October 2012.
- Under the aegis of Regional Integrated Multi-hazard Early warning System for Africa and Asia (RIMES), INCOIS is also providing ocean state forecast and other related warnings to 5 countries (Sri Lanka, Maldives, Seychelles, Madagascar and Cameroon).

### **ASIATIC LION CONSERVATION PROJECT**

***The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India has launched the "Asiatic Lion Conservation Project" with an aim to protect and conserve the world's last ranging free population of Asiatic Lion and its associated ecosystem.***

#### **OBJECTIVE:**

The **Asiatic Lion Conservation Project** will strengthen the ongoing measures for conservation and recovery of Asiatic Lion with the help of state-of-the-art techniques/ instruments, regular scientific research studies, disease management, Modern surveillance/ patrolling techniques.

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The total budget of the project for 3 years that amounts to nearly Rs. 9784 lakh will be funded from the **Centrally Sponsored Scheme- Development of Wildlife Habitat (CSS-DWH)** with the contributing ratio being **60:40** of Central and State share.
- Asiatic lions that once ranged from Persia (Iran) to Palamau in Eastern India were almost driven to extinction by indiscriminate hunting and habitat loss.

- The last census in the year 2015 showed the population of 523 Asiatic Lions in Gir Protected Area Network that includes **Gir National Park, Gir Sanctuary, Pania Sanctuary, Mitiyala Sanctuary adjoining reserved forests, Protected Forests, and Unclassed Forests.**
- The Ministry in the past has supported Asiatic Lion in Gujarat by including it in list of 21 critically endangered species for recovery programme and financial assistance under the species recovery component of CSS-DWH.
- The project activities is envisaged in a manner to cause habitat improvement, scientific interventions, disease control and veterinary care supplemented with adequate eco development works for the fringe population in order to ensure a stable and viable Lion population in the Country.

#### **INTERNATIONAL CENTRE FOR AUTOMOTIVE TECHNOLOGY**

***International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT) launched the Certification with high security features in order to prevent use of forged certificates in New Delhi.***

This is a first of its kind initiative taken by any automotive certification agency in India for enhancing the security of the CMVR certificates which includes Type Approval Certificates (TAC) and Conformity of Production (COP) Certificates for vehicles, engines and components.

ICAT is the premier certification agency authorized by Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MORTH) for providing testing and certification services to the vehicle and component manufacturers situated within India and abroad. In addition to the certification services, ICAT is providing extensive testing services for product development and validation.

#### **SKILL DEVELOPMENT SCHEMES**

***Ministry of Minority Affairs is implementing following Skill Development schemes through the selected Project Implementing Agencies (PIAs) of their existing centres.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- **PMJVK**: In the restructured scheme, **Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakaram (PMJVK)** under innovative project, Hunar Hubs may be taken up for construction for enabling artisans/entrepreneurs to carry out exhibitions/Melas/food-courts/skill training in MCD Head Quarters which may be taken up for construction with 100% funding by the Ministry.
- **“Seekho aur Kamao (Learn & Earn)”**: This is a placement linked skill development scheme for minorities aimed at upgrading the skills of minority youth in various modern/traditional skills depending upon their qualification, present economic trends and market potential, which can earn them suitable employment or make them suitably skilled to go for self-employment.
- **Nai Manzil**: Scheme has been launched on 08th August, 2015 with an aims to benefit the minority youth who do not have a formal school leaving certificate i.e. those in the category of school dropouts or educated in the community education institutions like Madarsas, in order to provide them formal education and skills, and enable them to seek better employment in the organized sector and thus to equip them for better lives.
- The Ministry is also implementing **USTTAD scheme** wherein, inter-alia capacities of in traditional arts/crafts are built with a view to increasing their market potentials.

- The Maulana Azad Education Foundation under the Ministry also implements the **Gharib Nawaz Skill Development Program** on the lines of Seekho aur Kamao.

### **iGOT**

#### **BACKGROUND**

The **National Training Policy-2012** mandates that all civil servants will be provided with training to equip them with the competencies for their current or future jobs. The current structure of training for Government servants including domestic and foreign training is mostly available to very small section of the government servants.

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The **Integrated Government Online Training Programme (iGOT)** launched will augment the existing training mechanism with online module-based training coupled with certification.
- This will make training inputs available to government servant on site and on flexitime basis. Furthermore, the training will be focussed and targeted to the requirement of the officials.
- The e-Learning mode provides unparalleled opportunities for training to a large number of civil servants scattered all over the country.
- The online training programme through Massive Online Open Courses mechanism would be a platform to bring together the numerous Government and other training institutions for providing a single point of access to the repository of training resources.
- This will provide a broad training eco-system creating synergies across various premier training institutes of the country and will cater to the training needs which can encompass all the officials in the entire hierarchy of Central and State Governments.
- This platform will ultimately build a large training eco-system.
- The training courses under this programme will be accessible through DoPT's web portal.
- DoPT has collaborated with JPAL, South Asia and MIT, USA to launch MITx Micro Master Programmes for the government servants.

### **PIPELINE PROJECTS**

***The Prime Minister will lay foundation of Paradip Hyderabad Pipeline Product Project (PHPL) by Indian Oil Corporation Ltd. and Bokaro-Angul section of Jagdishpur-Haldia & Bokaro-Dhamra Gas Pipeline Project (PM Urja Ganga) by Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) on 24th Dec. 2018 during his visit to Odisha.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Rs 129.4 billion Urja Ganga gas pipeline project is now being extended to North East adding another 750-km up to Guwahati and later to all the state capitals of the region.
- As per the earlier plan, Urja Ganga project was targetted at meeting the energy requirements of 40 districts and 2,600 villages covering five Eastern states — Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal — by 2020.
- The 2,539 km project was launched in October 2016 and is also known as Jagdishpur-Haldia/Bokaro-Dhamra Pipeline (JHBDPL).
- Urja Ganga is also looking at creating city gas distribution networks in seven cities — Varanasi, Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Kolkata, Patna, Ranchi and Jamshedpur.

- It may also revive fertiliser units at Barauni in Bihar, Sindhri in Jharkhand, Talcher in Odisha and Gorakhpur in Uttar Pradesh.
- Gail is also working on a coal to the synthetic project in Odisha and the country is looking to cut 10 per cent import of natural gas by 2022 with additional focus on alternative energy sources like biofuel.

### **START-UP VILLAGE ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMME**

***Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP), the sub-scheme under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM) has the objective of helping rural households including women to set-up enterprises.***

#### **BACKGROUND**

The scheme was approved during 2015-16 and the enterprise formation started in 2017-18. As on 30th November 2018, a total of 30,352 enterprises were formed across 20 States where the scheme is operational.

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Skill building support is provided to all the entrepreneurs supported under Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme through Community Resource Persons for Enterprise Promotion (CRP-EP).
- SVEP process mandates the preparation of a Detailed Project Report (DPR) for each block.
- The DPR provides estimates of the potential of enterprises in various sectors in the block. The entrepreneurs have the freedom to identify the sectors in which they want to start businesses based on assessment of market potential.

### **INTER-STATE RIVER WATER SHARING DISPUTES**

***The Parliament has enacted Inter-State River Water Disputes (ISRWD) Act, 1956 for adjudication of disputes relating to waters of inter-State rivers and river valley thereof. When any request under the said Act is received from any State Government in respect of any water dispute on the inter-State rivers and the Central Government is of the opinion that the water dispute cannot be settled by negotiations, the Central Government constitutes a Water Disputes Tribunal for the adjudication of the water dispute.***

Currently, 5 water disputes Tribunals are active.

- In order to further streamline the adjudication of inter-State river water disputes, the Inter-State River Water Disputes (Amendment) Bill, 2017 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister for WR, RD & GR by amending the existing ISRWD Act, 1956.
- The Bill envisages to constitute a standalone Tribunal with permanent establishment and permanent office space and infrastructure so as to obviate with the need to set up a separate Tribunal for each water dispute which is invariably a time-consuming process.
- In the proposed Bill, there is a provision for establishment of a Dispute Resolution Committee (DRC) by the Central Government for resolving amicably, the inter- State water disputes within a maximum period of **one year and six months**.
- Any dispute, which cannot be settled by negotiations shall be referred to the Tribunal for its adjudication.

- The dispute so referred to the Tribunal shall be assigned by the Chairperson of the Tribunal to a Bench of the Tribunal for adjudication.
- The proposed amendments in the Bill will speed up the adjudication of water disputes referred to it.

### **SDG INDEX 2018**

***The index has been released by NITI Aayog in collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI), Global Green Growth Institute and United Nations in India.***

#### **BACKGROUND**

NITI Aayog has the twin mandate to oversee the implementation of SDGs in the country, and promote Competitive and Cooperative Federalism among States and Union Territories (UTs).

In exercise of these roles, NITI has developed the SDG India Index, a comprehensive Index to measure progress of States / UTs, through a single measurable Index and the First Baseline Report for 2018, prepared with the support of Global Green Growth Institute and UN in India.

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- It tracks progress of all States and UTs on 62 Priority Indicators based on each aggregate performance across 14 SDGs selected by NITI Aayog.
- The score ranges between 0 (performing poor) and 100 (achieved national target in meeting SDG).
- According to the Index, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu are progressing at a faster rate towards the SDG set for 2030.
- Among the UTs, Chandigarh is the front runner followed by Puducherry.
- U.P, Bihar and Assam are progressing at a slower rate.
- Tamil Nadu is the top scorer in eradicating poverty and also providing clean and affordable energy.
- The average score for the States was the worst in gender equality, in creating sustainable cities and communities, in enabling industry, innovation, and infrastructure, and in eradicating hunger.

### **NUTRITIONAL REHABILITATION CENTRES**

***Under National Health Mission (NHM) 1151 NRCs have been established all across the country to provide facility-based care for children with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and medical complications.***

- As per National Family Health Survey (NFHS 4, 2015-16), 7.5% of under five children are severely wasted and 35.8% of children are underweight.
- Children with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) along with medical complications are referred from villages by frontline workers such ASHA and Anganwadi workers and admitted to NRCs as per the defined admission criteria.
- In order to improve their health condition, medical and nutritional therapeutic care is provided during NRC stay.
- Regular and periodic review of NRC functionality is carried out under child health programme by central and State Government teams including through Common Review Mission visits.

**SAMAGRA SHIKSHA SCHEME**

***Samagra Shiksha Scheme running successfully to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels of school education.***

**SAMGRA SHIKSHA SCHEME**

- It is an Integrated Scheme for School Education has been launched throughout the country as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme with effect from the year 2018-19.
- This programme subsumes the three erstwhile Centrally Sponsored Schemes of **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE)**.
- It is an overarching programme for the school education sector extending from pre-school to class XII and aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels of school education.
- **The major interventions under the scheme are:**
  - a. Universal Access including Infrastructure Development and Retention.
  - b. Gender and Equity.
  - c. Inclusive Education.
  - d. Quality.
  - e. Financial support for Teacher Salary.
  - f. Digital initiatives.
  - g. Entitlements under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 including uniforms, textbooks etc.
  - h. Pre-school Education.
  - i. Vocational Education.
  - j. Sports and Physical Education.
  - k. Strengthening of Teacher Education and Training.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- The main emphasis of the Scheme is on improving quality of school education and the strategy of all interventions would be to enhance the Learning Outcomes at all levels of schooling.
- Annual Grant of Rs. 5,000 to Rs. 20,000/- per school for strengthening of Libraries.
- Composite school grant increased from Rs. 14,500-50,000 to Rs. 25,000-1 Lakh and to be allocated on the basis of school enrolment.
- Annual Grant for sports equipments at the cost of Rs. 5000 for Primary Schools, Rs. 10,000 for upper primary schools and up to Rs. 25,000 for secondary and senior secondary schools.
- Allocation for children with Special Needs (CWSN) increased from Rs. 3,000 to Rs. 3,500 per child per annum including a stipend of Rs. 200 per month for CWSN girls to be provided from Classes I to XII – earlier it was only for classes IX to XII.
- Allocation for uniforms enhanced from Rs. 400 to Rs. 600 per child per annum.
- Allocation for textbooks enhanced from Rs. 150/250 to Rs. 250/400 per child per annum.
- Upgradation of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs) from Class 6-8 to Class 6-12.
- Strengthening Teacher Education Institutions like SCERTs and DIETs to improve the quality of teachers with SCERT as the nodal institution for in-service and pre-service teacher training
- Enhanced use of digital technology in education through smart classrooms, digital boards and DTH channels.
- Preference for opening of new school is given to tribal areas, and areas with high concentration of Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST) and minority population.

- The districts with high concentration of population of SCs, STs and Muslims have been identified as Special Focus Districts (SFDs) for ensuring equity and inclusion at all levels of school education.

### **KALA UTSAV**

***Kala Utsav is organized by Department of Arts and Aesthetics (DEAA), Yoga Olympiad is organized by Department of Education in Social Sciences (DESS) and ICT Mela is organized by CIET- NCERT.***

- Kala Utsav is an initiative of the Government to promote artistic talent among secondary school students from all over the country in the field of Dance, Music, Theater and Visual Arts & Crafts through competitions.
- Yoga Olympiad is organised to promote yoga activities in schools, healthy habits, human values and holistic health.
- Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET), a constituents unit of NCERT, has been organizing All India Children's Educational Audio Video Festival since last 22 years and ICT Mela for last three years with the objective to share, exchange innovative ideas and encourage development of quality digital contents programme at National and State level.

### **INFORMATION FUSION CENTRE-INDIAN OCEAN REGION**

***Raksha Mantri, launched the Information Fusion Centre – Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) at Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) Gurugram.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The IFC-IOR aims to engage with partner nations and multi-national maritime constructs to develop comprehensive maritime domain awareness and share information on vessels of interest.
- IFC – IOR shall be a collaborative construct that will work with partners, countries as well as international agencies; to enhance maritime security and safety.
- It would also aim to work closely with the multi-national constructs and other information fusion centres.
- IFC-IOR would work towards capability building in the region, coordination of incident response and disaster relief, and in time, also share submarine safety information
- The information exchange at the IFC-IOR would be initially undertaken by virtual means, using telephone calls, faxes, emails and video conferencing over internet.
- Subsequently, to enable better interaction, quicker analysis of information and provide timely inputs, the IFC-IOR would host Liaison Officers from partner countries.
- Additionally, towards enhancing capability building, the IFC-IOR would undertake conduct of exercises and training capsules in maritime information collation and sharing.
- Indian navy is mandated to conclude white shipping information exchange agreements with 36 countries and three multi-national constructs.

#### **WHITE SHIPPING**

- White shipping information refers to exchange of relevant advance information on the identity and movement of commercial non-military merchant vessels.
- Advance information of the vessels like destination and planned itinerary, etc. is extremely helpful towards collating an effective Maritime Domain Awareness.

- This information is likely to be available with the country from whose port it sails and is equally relevant for the destination country and those it passes enroute.
- India has signed white shipping agreements with several countries including United States and Singapore and is seeking similar agreement with more countries.

### **BOGIBEEL BRIDGE**

***The Bogibeel Bridge is the country's longest road-cum-rail bridge, and its fourth longest of any kind above water.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The Bogibeel Bridge, inside Assam, is 20 km from the border with Arunachal Pradesh.
- It connects Dibrugarh on the Brahmaputra's south bank to Dhemaji on the north bank.
- The Bogibeel Bridge upstages the 4.62-km Vembanad Bridge between Edappally and Vallarpadam in Kochi, Kerala, as well as the 4.55-km Digha-Sonpur across Ganga in Bihar.
- In a comparison of all bridges across water, the Bogibeel comes in at fourth, after the neighbouring Dhola-Sadiya road bridge (9.15 km), the Patna-Hajipur road bridge (5.75 km), and the Bandra-Worli Sea Link (5.6 km).
- In October, the Centre announced a plan for construction of a 19-km bridge over the Brahmaputra from Dhubri in Assam to Phulbari in Meghalaya.

### **COP 24**

***The 24th Session of the of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 24) was held in Katowice, Poland on 02nd– 15th December 2018.***

#### **It focused on 3 key issues such as**

1. Finalization of guidelines/ rules for the implementation of Paris Agreement,
2. The conclusion of 2018 Facilitative Talanoa Dialogue and
3. The stocktake of Pre-2020 actions implementation and ambition.

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The guidance on adaptation recognizes the principle including equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC).
- Parties have also agreed to initiate the work on setting up the new collective finance goals post-2020 from the floor of USD 100 billion.
- The guidance on Nationally Determined Contributions provides for Parties to submit different types of contributions including adaptation.
- The outcome on Talanoa dialogue also recalls the commitment of developed country Parties to a goal of mobilizing jointly USD 100 billion per year by 2020.

#### **TALANOA DIALOGUE**

- The countries put in place a road-map for 'Talanoa Dialogue' in COP 23 which is a year-long process to assess the countries' progress on climate actions.
- Under this, it was agreed that the next two climate conferences, in 2018 and 2019, will have special 'stock-taking' sessions.

- This stock-take would focus on the ‘pre-2020 actions’ being taken by different countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- It included the progress made by developed nations in their obligations to provide finance and technology support to the developing countries.
- It reflected a strong message to developed countries that post-2020 climate action as part of the Paris Agreement cannot be divorced from pre-2020 commitments.

#### **TASK FORCE FOR WILDLIFE PROTECTION**

***India, Nepal and Bhutan are considering having a joint taskforce to protect wildlife across the Kanchenjunga Landscape, a trans-boundary region spread across Nepal, India and Bhutan.***

- It will allow free movement of wildlife across political boundaries and checking smuggling of wildlife across the landscape.
- The landscape stretches along the southern side of Mount Kanchenjunga covers Nepal (21%), Bhutan (23%) and India (56%).

#### **DEEP EARTH**

- It is the region that exists between 2 km and 3 km below the ocean-floor.
- It consists of about 2-2.3 billion cubic km, which is about twice the volume of the oceans combined.
- Its biosphere constitutes “Subterranean Galapagos” which includes members of all 3 domains of life – Bacteria, Archaea and Eukarya.
- Bacteria and archaea (microbes with no membrane-bound nucleus) dominate deep earth.
- Eukarya, multicellular organisms with cells that contain a nucleus as well as membrane bound organelles, found less in numbers.
- Scientists say about 70% of earth’s bacteria and archaea live in the subsurface.

#### **TRANS REGIONAL MARITIME NETWORK (T-RMN)**

- It facilitates information exchange on the movement of commercial traffic on the high seas.
- It is a multilateral agreement comprises 30 countries and is steered by Italy.
- India has recently signed the ascension agreement to the T-RMN.

#### **GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD**

***Recently, several threats are including power lines are decimating its populations. And their grassland homes are now sites of renewable power projects (wind turbines).***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The great Indian bustard (or simply Indian bustard), a large, white-and-brown bird with wing markings, is native to India and Pakistan.
- India effectively the only home of the bustards, now harbours less than 150 individuals in five States.
- It is listed in Schedule I of India’s Wildlife Protection Act.
- It has almost lost its 90% of its original habitat.
- Hunting was one of the first factors that caused the decline of its population.
- The arid grassland that bustards thrive in are being made productive by increasing water availability and expansion of agricultural lands.

- Poor frontal vision and heavy bodies of bustards cannot manoeuvre away from cables in time.
- **Project Great Indian Bustard** — state of Rajasthan — identifying and fencing off bustard breeding grounds in existing protected areas as well as provide secure breeding enclosures in areas outside protected areas

Protected areas:

- Desert National Park Sanctuary — Rajasthan.
- Rollapadu Wildlife Sanctuary – Andhra Pradesh.
- Karera Wildlife Sanctuary– Madhya Pradesh.
- 

### **MONUMENTS ADOPTED UNDER 'ADOPT A HERITAGE PROJECT'**

*The government recently handed over a Memorandum of Understanding to Resbird Technologies under the 'Adopt a Heritage' project for the development of a mobile audio guide application for five iconic sites.*

- The five iconic sites are as follows:
- Rajasthan – Amer Fort.
- Assam – Kaziranga.
- Goa – Colva Beach.
- Kerala – Kumarakom.
- Bihar – Mahabodhi Temple.

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The 'Adopt A Heritage: Apni Dharohar, Apni Pehchaan' scheme is a collaborative effort by **Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Culture, Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) and State/UTs Governments.**
- It focuses development and maintenance of tourist amenities at heritage sites and making them tourist friendly, to enhance tourism potential and cultural importance in a planned and phased manner.
- The Project envisages involvement of Private/Public Companies / Organizations and Individuals to adopt Monuments, Natural Heritage Sites and other Tourist Sites in the country, primarily under CSR for funding.
- The 10 monuments adopted under the scheme are – Red Fort, Gandikota Fort, Gangotri Temple and Trail to Gaumukh, Mt.Stok Kangri Trek in Ladakh, Jantar Mantar, Surajkund, Qutub Minar, Ajanata caves, Leh Palace, Hazara Rama Temple in Hampi.

### **INDIA'S 1<sup>ST</sup> RAILWAY UNIVERSITY**

*The National Rail and Transportation Institute (NRTI) in Vadodara, Gujarat is the first railway university in India and third such university in the world after Russia and China.*

- At present it has two under-graduate programmes - B.Sc. in Transportation Technology and BBA programme in Transportation Management.
- The university also aims to start master's programme from 2019-20 academic session in areas such as Transportation and Systems Design, Transport Systems Engineering, Transport Policy and Economics, among others.

- The Ministry of Railways is funding the university and has sanctioned Rs 4.21 billion for next five years.

### **GLOBAL GENDER GAP REPORT 2018**

***World Economic Forum (WEF) has recently released Global Gender Gap report 2018.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Gender gap is measured across 4 key pillars such as **Economic opportunity, political empowerment, educational attainment and Health & Survival.**
- According to the report, India has been ranked 108th out of 149 countries. It retains the same rank as in 2017.
- The global list was topped by Iceland for the 10th consecutive year, having closed more than 85.8 per cent of its overall gender gap.
- Iceland is followed by Norway, Sweden and Finland in the top slots.
- According to the report, the world has closed 68 per cent of its gender gap and at the current rate of change, it will take 108 years to close the overall gender gap and 202 years to bring about parity in the workplace.
- South Asia was the second-lowest ranking region in the index, with only 65 per cent of its gender gap now closed.

#### **INDIA'S POSITION**

- India continues to rank third-lowest in the world on health and survival and remained world's least improved country in this sub index over the past decade.
- Only two countries were below India on health & survival sub index ranking (Armenia at 148 and China at 149) and Sri Lanka stood at the top position in the category.
- However, India has slightly improved in the WEF's indicator of wage equality for similar work.
- India has also closed its tertiary education enrolment gap for the first time this year.
- It has also managed to keep its primary and secondary gaps closed for the 3rd year consecutively.

### **BADSHAHI ASHURKHANA**

***Telangana government and Aga Khan Trust are working to restore the Ashurkhana monument.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- Badshahi Ashurkhana is a Shia Muslim mourning place, near Charminar in Hyderabad, India.
- It was constructed in memory of martyrdom of Imam Hussain and is used during the festival of Moharram.
- It was built by Muhammed Quli Qutb Shah in 1611, three years after building the Charminar.
- The Ashoorkhana turns into a pilgrimage site when alams (battle standards) are installed to commemorate the battle of Karbala in 680 A.D. Ashoora or 10th day of Muharram is when the battle took place.
- The monument was lost for several decades when Emperor Aurangzeb's forces turned it into a bandikhana to keep wheeled vehicles.

**BUDDHAS OF BAMİYAN**

- The Bamiyan valley is enclosed by the Hindu Kush Mountains, which is located in Afghanistan.
- The valley lies on the ancient Silk Route and hence, witnessed several developments.
- It was an important hub for trade and served as the site for early Hindu-Buddhist settlements from which it takes its name.
- Several Buddhist monasteries, caves and Buddha statues can be found across the valley.
- The Cultural Landscape and Archaeological Remains of the Bamiyan Valley comprise eight separate sites spread across the valley and its tributaries.
- Of these, the Bamiyan cliffs where once two giant Buddhas stood are the most famous.
- The valley is a UNESCO world heritage site.

**NATIONAL SUPERCOMPUTING MISSION**

***India has recently granted contract to French technology firm to build 70 supercomputers under the National Supercomputing Mission.***

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- The mission aims to connect national academic and R&D institutions with a supercomputing grid of over 70 high-performance computing facilities.
- Supercomputers will be installed across the country and will be networked on the National Supercomputing grid over the National Knowledge Network (NKN).
- It will be implemented by the Department of Science and Technology and Department of Electronics and Information Technology (DeitY) through Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC) and IISc, Bangalore.
- The Mission also includes development of highly professional High Performance Computing (HPC) aware human resource for meeting challenges of development of these applications.
- The NKN is another programme of the government which connects academic institutions and R&D labs over a high speed network.

**SPACECRAFT BERESHEET**

***Israel is set to launch the country's first spacecraft to the moon.***

- If it becomes successful, it will be the first private spacecraft to be launched by Israel and would be the 4th country to land on the moon.
- The spacecraft, called Beresheet, or Genesis in Hebrew, weighing 585 kg.
- It will be sent via a Falcon 9 rocket from SpaceX firm.
- It will take around a month to arrive in the moon.

**PM UJJWALA YOJANA**

***Union Cabinet has recently approved the expansion of the scheme to all poor households (not covered under the existing beneficiary categories).***

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- The Scheme was launched in 2016 to provide free cooking gas (LPG) connections to poor households.

- Under the scheme, the government provides a subsidy of Rs. 1,600 to state-owned fuel retailers for every free LPG gas connection that they install in poor households.
- This subsidy is intended to cover the security fee for the cylinder and the fitting charges.
- The scheme allows beneficiaries to pay for the stove and the first refill in monthly installments.
- However, the cost of all subsequent refills has to be borne by the beneficiary household.
- So far, the scheme targeted the poor and underprivileged listed in the Socio-Economic and Caste Census, 2011.

### FAROUT

***Astronomers have reported the discovery of the most distant body ever observed in the Solar System, at 120 astronomical units (AU) from the Sun.***

- This has led to the nickname “Farout” for the object, provisionally titled 2018 VG18.
- Farout is also the first known Solar System object that has been detected at a distance that is more than 100 times farther than Earth is from the Sun.
- For context, the second-most distant observed Solar System object is Eris, at about 96 AU. Pluto is currently at about 34 AU.
- 1 AU is defined as the distance between the Earth and the Sun.

### WARLI ART

- Warli is a tribal art form that was mostly created by the Adivasis of the Western Ghats.
- It is one of the oldest art forms in India that originated in Maharashtra and is still practiced.
- The Warli tribe, which does these paintings, is one of India’s largest tribes located on the outskirts of Mumbai.
- Their culture basis itself around the concept of Mother Nature; therefore, elements of nature serve as focal points for Warli paintings.
- These artists used to use the clay walls of their huts as a canvas for their paintings.
- These paintings use a set of geometric shapes – circle, triangle and square.
- This comes from the tribe’s observation of nature as circle represents the sun and the moon, while the triangle represents the mountains and pointed trees.
- The square on the other hand is a human invention, indicating a sacred piece of land or enclosure.
- The Warli artists use only a white paste made out of rice paste and water and they use glue as a binder.
- Artists use a bamboo stick which is chewed at the end to give it a paintbrush like texture.
- In ritual Warli paintings, walls are painted only to celebrate special occasions like harvest or weddings

### PRALAY

***The trial of the missile was recently deferred by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) due to the cyclone Phethai.***

### FACTS

- It is a newly developed surface-to-surface tactical missile.

- It is a derivative of Prithvi Defence Vehicle (PDV) exo-atmospheric interceptor which can destroy enemy weapons at high altitudes.
- It has a payload of 1 tonne and it has the capacity to strike targets 350 km away.
- It can travel up to 500 km if the payload is halved.
- It is propelled by solid-fuel rocket.
- It can fly faster than the conventional missiles in its class and can evade ballistic missile defence system.
- It will be launched from its own canister-based transport erector launcher.

### **INTERNATIONAL PRESS INSTITUTE**

***According to Death Watch list published by International Press Institute, 78 journalists were killed in 2018.***

IPI's Death Watch lists journalists and media staff who were deliberately targeted because of their profession either because of their reporting or simply because they were journalists as well as those who lost their lives while on assignment.

- IPI is a global network of editors, journalists and media executives who share a common dedication to quality, independent journalism.
- Its headquarters is based in Vienna.
- It represents leading digital, print and broadcast news outlets in nearly 100 countries.
- According to its 2017 report, India and Mexico are the two countries where the greatest number of recent cases are pending investigation.

### **ADVANCED TOWED ARTILLERY GUN SYSTEM (ATAGS)**

- It is a 155mm, 52 calibre gun being developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation.
- Indian Army has recently begun finalising the Preliminary Specifications Qualitative Requirements (PSQR) for the gun system.
- DRDO developed the gun system in two parallel protocols.
- The gun is currently weighing about 18 tonnes while the ideal weight is 14-15 tonnes.
- Significant features of the gun system - All-electric drive, high mobility, quick deployability, auxiliary power mode, advanced communications system, automated command and control system.

### **POKKALI PADDY**

***Pokkali paddy variety is a saltwater-tolerant paddy grown in the coastal fields of Alappuzha, Ernakulam and Thrissur districts of Kerala.***

- It is endemic to Kerala and was given Geographical Indication (GI) tag.
- It grows to a height of up to 2 m and it survived the recent devastating floods in farmlands across the State.
- The single-season paddy is raised in saltwater fields between June and November followed by a season of fish-farming.
- After the harvest, the paddy stubble in the fields acts as food and shelter for shrimp and small fish.

- Fish excreta and scales, along with the decomposed stubble, provide excellent natural manure for another season of Pokkali.
- The cultivation is labour intensive and this farming tradition is under threat due to lack of labour.

### **STATES START-UP RANKING**

***The Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP) announced results of the first ever States' Start-up Ranking 2018 recently.***

- The key objective of the exercise was to encourage States/UT to take proactive steps towards strengthening the Start-up ecosystems in their states.
- The States have been identified under different categories - Start-up policy leaders, incubation hubs, seeding innovation, scaling innovation, regulatory change champions, procurement leaders, communication champions, North-Eastern leader, and hill state leader.
- Based on these categories, the States have been recognised as the Best Performer, Top Performers, Leaders, Aspiring Leaders, Emerging States and Beginners.
- Gujarat has been identified as the best performer.
- Karnataka, Kerala, Odisha, and Rajasthan have been identified as the top performers.
- Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Telangana have been identified as leaders.

### **LALITGIRI MUSEUM**

***Earliest Buddhist settlements in Lalitgiri, Cuttack district, Odisha has been recently converted in to a museum.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- it will be the third site museum of the Bhubaneswar circle of the Archaeological Survey of India after Ratnagiri and Konrak.
- Excavations at Lalitgiri shows the cultural community from the post-Mauryan period till the 13th century CE.
- Lalitgiri along with the Ratnagiri and Udayagiri sites are known as the "Diamond Triangle".
- Excavations at the site shows that "Tantric Buddhism" was practiced.
- Tantric Buddhism is a tradition that focuses on mystical practices and concepts as a path to enlightenment and is associated with the Vajrayana sects.

### **ANAK KRAKATAU**

***Anak Krakatau Volcano in the middle of the Java and Sumatra islands in the Sunda Strait erupted and triggered underwater landslides.***

- This has led to Volcano triggered Tsunami in the region.
- Also called the "Child of Krakatoa", it emerged around 1928 in the caldera of Krakatoa, a volcanic island that violently erupted in 1883.
- It has become a small volcanic island with subsequent lava flows at an altitude of 1000 feet above sea level.
- The island is part of the Ujung Kulon National Park, listed in UNESCO's World Heritage site.
- Since its birth, it has been in a state of semi-continuous eruptive activity.
- Indonesia has nearly 130 active volcanoes, forming part of the pacific "Ring of Fire".

- Indonesia's proximity to the junction of 3 continental plates, makes it particularly vulnerable to earthquakes and eruptions.
- According to the International Tsunami Information Centre, Tsunamis triggered by volcanic eruptions are relatively rare, caused by the sudden displacement of water or "slope failure".
- Unlike earthquake triggered Tsunami, which trigger alert systems, Volcano triggered give little time to give warning.

#### **CHENNAI ANDAMAN NICOBAR ISLAND (CANI) CABLE SYSTEM**

***CANI is a proposed project to provide high speed internet to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in order to augment their communication infrastructure.***

- It is a 2,200-km-long optical fibre system with a speed of 100 Gigabit per second.
- It will connect the Indian mainland from Chennai with the 8 islands of UT.
- They are Port Blair, Little Andaman (Hut Ba), Car Nicobar, Kamorta, Great Nicobar (Campbell Bay), Havelock, Long and Rangat.
- Under the proposal, the sub-marine cable system will be laid on the sea bed and the total route length will be 2,199.66 km.
- It is set to provide a fillip to defence communication infrastructure in the islands and improve communication during natural disasters.
- At present, telecom connectivity between the mainland and the islands is through satellites with limited bandwidth capacity.

#### **CLIMATE VULNERABILITY REPORT**

***Climate Vulnerability Assessment for the Indian Himalayan Region Using a Common Framework is a first-of-its-kind report prepared by the Department of Science and Technology.***

- According to the report, all the 12 Himalayan states in India are extremely vulnerable to global warming.
- It is based on 4 indicators:
  1. The economic and sociological status of the people and their health.
  2. Possible impact on agriculture production.
  3. Forest-dependent livelihoods.
  4. Access to information services and infrastructure.
- States having low per capita income, low area under irrigation and low area under forests per 1,000 households and high area under open forests received a high vulnerability score.
- Assam, Mizoram and Jammu & Kashmir topped the list.
- Sikkim is the least vulnerable state.

#### **PAIKA REBELLION**

***Prime Minister has recently released the commemorative stamp and coin on Paika Rebellion.***

- The setting up of a Chair on the Paika Rebellion, in Utkal University, Bhubaneswar, was also announced.
- It was an armed rebellion against the British East India Company's rule in Odisha in 1817.
- The Paiks were the traditional landed militia of Khurda, Odisha.

- Rulers of Khurda were traditionally the custodians of Jagannath Temple and ruled as the deputy of Lord Jagannath on earth.
- The British, having established their sway over Bengal Province occupied the Khurda's land in 1803 and took over the hereditary rent-free lands granted to Paikas.
- The Paikas rose in armed rebellion in 1817 under the leadership of Baxi Jagabandhu.
- The tribals of Ghumusar and other sections of the population actively took part in it.
- Many scholars, researchers and historians have opined that the Paika Rebellion was India's first organized armed rebellion against British Raj.

### **NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SAFAI KARAMCHARIS (NCSK)**

***NCSK has recommended that all states across India should have individual state safai karamchari commissions in order to end the practice of manual scavenging.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- NCSK was constituted as a statutory body via an act of parliament National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993.
- The act was lapsed in 2004.
- Now, it is a non-statutory body and its tenure is extended from time to time through government resolutions.
- It makes recommendations in its annual report to Social Justice and Empowerment ministry.
- Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013 outlaws manual scavenging but people still being employed in the manual cleaning of dry toilets, sewer and septic tanks.

### **FALL ARMYWORM**

***Tamil Nadu State government has recently launched awareness programme among farmers to fight invasive pest fall armyworm.***

- It has been wreaking havoc in the farmlands of Maize in the state of Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar and Assam.
- It is a major maize pest in North America and it arrived in Africa in 2016.
- It has spread to Central and Western Africa in 2016 and has proved very hard to control.
- It prefers Maize, but can feed on 80 species of plants, including rice, sorghum, millet, sugarcane and cotton.
- It can be controlled with insecticides, through natural enemies or by inter-cropping.

### **INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION**

***Recently Japan announced to quit from the International Whaling Commission and resume commercial whaling.***

On 13 September 2018, IWC members gathered in Florianopolis, Brazil, where they discussed and rejected a proposal by Japan to renew commercial whaling. Through the "**Florianopolis Declaration**", it was concluded that the purpose of the IWC is the conservation of whales and that they would now safeguard the marine mammals in perpetuity and would allow the recovery of all whale populations to pre-industrial whaling levels

- The International Whaling Commission is an Inter-governmental Organization whose purpose is the conservation of whales and the management of whaling.
- The legal framework of the IWC is the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling.
- The IWC allows non-zero whaling quotas for aboriginal subsistence and also member nations may issue 'Scientific Permits' to their citizens.
- All member countries of the IWC are signatories to this Convention, the IWC has a current membership of 89 Governments from countries all over the world.
- India joined as a member of International Whaling Commission in 1981.

### **HONGYUN PROJECT**

***China has launched its first communication satellite to provide broadband internet services worldwide.***

- The satellite is the first in the Hongyun project planned by China Aerospace Science and Industry Corp (CASIC).
- The Hongyun project aims to build a space-based communications network to provide broadband internet connectivity to users around the world, especially those in the underserved regions.
- Once completed Hongyun will cover the whole world and offer round-the-clock communication services to users in Polar Regions, who now have difficulties accessing telecommunication and internet services, even from on board an aircraft or a ship or in a remote area.

### **SHEIKH CHILLI**

- Sheikh Chilli is a Sufi saint whose tomb is in Thanesar, Haryana.
- He was Mughal Prince Dara Shikoh's spiritual advisor.
- Thanesar was a well known centre of the Sufi Chishti silsila.
- The tomb is situated in the Old Trunk Road.
- In the middle of the complex there is a shallow tank.
- Galleries are found around the tank and they were used as madarasa which is a place to study
- Dara Shukoh could have built the madarsa to promote the Qadriya order of Suifism.
- The madarsa dates back to the mid-17th century when Dara Shukoh was powerful in the Mughal court.

### **CHHAU DANCE**

***Recently the distinctive Chhau mask of Purulia, West Bengal was awarded the Geographic Indication tag.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The traditional rural craft of making masks is an integral component of the semi-martial art dance form of Chhau.
- Chhau dance is a tradition from eastern India that enacts episodes from epics including the Mahabharata and Ramayana, local folklore and abstract themes.
- Its three distinct styles hail from the regions of Seraikella (Jharkhand) , Purulia (West Bengal) and Mayurbhanj (Odisha), the first two using masks.

- Chhau dance is intimately connected to regional festivals, notably the spring festival Chaitra Parva.
- The dance is performed at night in an open space to traditional and folk melodies, played on the reed pipes "mohuri" and "shehnai."
- In 2010 the Chhau dance was inscribed in the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

#### **MADAN MOHAN MALVIYA**

- Madan Mohan Malaviya was an Indian educationist, freedom fighter and the thrice president of Indian National Congress.
- He was respectfully addressed as 'Mahamana', he was the founder of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) at Varanasi in 1916, which was created under the B.H.U. Act, 1915.
- He also founded a highly influential English-newspaper, "The Leader" which was published from Allahabad.
- Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya was posthumously conferred with Bharat Ratna.

#### **BIMAL JALAN PANEL**

***RBI in consultation with the Government has set up Bimal Jalan Panel to review the economic capital framework of the central bank.***

- The economic capital issue was a bone of contention, among other issues, between the central bank and the Finance Ministry.
- To solve this, RBI board has decided to setup this panel.
- It is a 6-member committee with Economic Secretary, RBI Deputy Governor, members of RBI board as members.
- Terms of reference of the committee –
  1. To review status, need and justification of various provisions, reserves and buffers presently provided for by the RBI,
  2. Review best practices followed by the central banks globally in making assessment and provisions for risks, to which central bank balance sheets are subjected.
  3. Suggest an adequate level of risk provisioning that the RBI needs to maintain, and to determine whether it is holding provisions, reserves and buffers in surplus or deficit of the required level.
  4. Propose a suitable profit distribution policy taking into account all the likely situations of the RBI.
- The committee would submit its report within 90 days from the date of its first meeting.

#### **BACKGROUND**

- In the past, the issue of the ideal size of RBI's reserves was examined by three committees -- V Subrahmanyam (1997), Usha Thorat (2004) and Y H Malegam (2013).
- While the Subrahmanyam committee recommended that contingency reserve should be built up to 12 per cent, the Thorat committee had said the reserve adequacy should be maintained at 18 per cent of the total assets.
- The RBI board did not accept the recommendation of the Thorat committee and decided to continue with the recommendation of the Subrahmanyam panel.

- The Malegam committee recommended that adequate amount of profits should continue to be transferred each year to contingency reserves.

### HIGH COURT FOR ANDHRA PRADESH

***Andhra Pradesh and Telangana are set to have separate high courts by January, 2019.***

- This is in line with the Supreme Court order issued to the centre to bifurcate the common Hyderabad high court for both the States.
- Notification for this purpose was issued by the President quoting Article 214 of the Constitution, which provides that there shall be a High Court for each State.
- The President was conferred power under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014 to constitute separate high court for both States.
- The principal seat of the Andhra Pradesh High Court is Amaravati, the capital of the State.
- The High Court in Hyderabad will function separately as the High Court of the State of Telangana.
- With the creation of the new high court, the country now has 25 high courts.

### Common High Courts in India

Following are the list of High Courts which have jurisdiction over more than 1 State/UT.

- **Bombay HC** - Goa, Dadra and Nager Haveli, Daman and Diu and Maharashtra
- **Calcutta HC** - Andaman & Nicobar Islands and West Bengal
- **Guwahati HC** - Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland.
- **Kerala HC** – Lakshadweep and Kerala
- **Madras HC** – Pondicherry and Tamil Nadu
- **Punjab and Haryana HC** – Chandigarh, Punjab and Haryana

### OLIVE RIDLEY SITES

***A new olive ridley mass nesting site is going to be added in Odisha's wildlife map.***

- Odisha forest department has started preparing the beach at the Bahuda river mouth in Ganjam district for mass nesting of olive ridley.
- The Bahuda rookery is located 20km to the south of Rushikulya rookery coast, a major mass nesting site of olive ridleys.
- Also known as the Pacific ridley sea turtle, Olive turtles are a medium-sized species of sea turtle found in warm and tropical waters, primarily in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.
- They are best known for their behavior of synchronized nesting in mass numbers.
- The Convention on Migratory Species and the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles have also provided olive ridleys with protection, leading to increased conservation and management for this marine turtle.
- It is included in Vulnerable category by the IUCN Red list.

### AVANGARD HYPERSONIC MISSILE

***Avangard, Hypersonic missile system in Russia, was recently test fired successfully.***

- It is Intercontinental missile system and considered as a strategic weapon.
- It could fly at 20 times the speed of sound and manoeuvre up and down, meaning that it could breach defence systems

- The final test of the missile comes after US announced its withdrawal from Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF).

#### **Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty**

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

#### **BIMS**

***Bidder Information Management System (BIMS) was launched by Ministry of Road Transport & Highways.***

- It is aimed at streamlining the process of prequalification of bidders for EPC Mode of contracts for National Highway works with enhanced transparency and objectivity.
- The portal will work as a database of information about bidders, covering basic details, civil works experience, cash accruals and network, annual turnover etc.
- BIMS portal will significantly reduce the procurement time for projects through an objective and transparent online evaluation system thereby leading to accelerated project implementation.

#### **BHOOMI RASHI**

***Recently union government proposed the Integration of PFMS with Bhoomi Rashi, to facilitate payment related to compensation for land acquisition to all the beneficiaries directly through the Bhoomi Rashi system.***

- It is a portal developed by MoRTH and NIC, comprises the entire revenue data of the country, right down to 6.4 lakh villages.
- The entire process flow for land acquisition from issuing notifications for land acquisition, submission of draft notification by the State Government to its approval will be carried out by the portal.
- Bhoomi Rashi portal has been instrumental in reducing the time taken for approval and publication of notifications pertaining to land acquisition

#### **PFMS**

- PFMS, earlier known as Central Plan Schemes Monitoring System (CPSMS), is a web-based online software application.
- It is developed and implemented by the Office of Controller General of Accounts.
- It is launched with the objective of tracking funds released under all Plan schemes of GoI, and real time reporting of expenditure at all levels of Programme implementation.

- In 2013, its scope was enlarged to cover direct payment to beneficiaries under both Plan and non-Plan Schemes.
- In 2014, it has been envisaged that digitization of accounts shall be achieved through PFMS.
- The biggest strength of PFMS is its integration with the Core banking system.

#### **HIGH NITROGEN STEEL**

- High nitrogen steel (HNS) is corrosion-resistant material, it has better holistic capabilities and mechanical properties than rolled homogenous Armor steel and imported metals.
- The potential applications of HNS include combat platforms like futuristic infantry combat vehicles, mine-protected vehicles, army bridges and army corridors.
- In India Mishra Dhatu Nigam (MIDHANI), Hyderabad is having production capacity to manufacture high-nitrogen steel (HNS) for Armor applications.
- This steel is will be produced in commercial scale as part of transfer of technology from Defense Metallurgical Research Laboratory (DMRL).

#### **eBuzz K9**

***The Delhi Government has initiated the trials of zero emission and noise free 12 Meter electric bus called eBuzz K9.***

- The trials will be conducted for 3 months, which enable the authorities to evaluate the efficiency and competency of the buses in the standard road conditions of Delhi.
- The bus can run up to 300 km on a single recharge, the electric bus has a seating capacity of 36, including the driver.
- The special feature of the bus is its integrated regenerative braking recovers 30 per cent of lost braking energy and comes with high power AC charging in 3-4 hours.

#### **ULTIMA THULE**

***Recently it is reported that the spacecraft will reach icy object nicknamed Ultima Thule (TOO-lee).***

- NASA's New Horizons spacecraft was launched in 2006, this was the first spacecraft to provide the close-up views of the Pluto.
- Ultima Thule will be the farthest world ever explored by humankind, no spacecraft has visited anything so primitive.
- Pluto is barely in the Kuiper Belt, the so-called Twilight Zone stretching beyond Neptune, Ultima Thule is in the Twilight Zone's heart.
- The color of Ultima Thule is expected to be darker than coal, burned by eons of cosmic rays, with a reddish hue.

#### **Kuiper Belt**

- The Kuiper Belt is a region of the Solar System that exists beyond the eight major planets.
- It is similar to the asteroid belt, in that it contains many small bodies, all remnants from the Solar System's formation.
- But unlike the Asteroid Belt, it is much larger – 20 times as wide and 20 to 200 times as massive.

#### **KASHMIRI STAG**

- The Hangul Deer or Kashmiri Stag is the state animal of Jammu & Kashmir.
- It is the only sub-species of European red deer in India.

- The animal was classified as 'critically endangered' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- Dachigam National Park in Srinagar is considered to be the last undisturbed home of the Kashmiri stag.
- Similar in appearance to the European red deer, the Kashmir stag has a tiny white rump patch and a short dark tail.

### CONVENTION ON BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

***India has recently submitted its Sixth National Report (NR6) to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).***

- CBD provides the framework of an international law, recognising conservation of biological diversity as an integral part of the development process.
- The CBD is aimed at conserving biological diversity, sustainably using biological components and fair and equitable sharing of benefits (with local or indigenous communities) that may arise out of the utilisation of genetic resources.
- Equitable sharing of benefits was delineated in the Nagoya Protocol, which came into effect in 2014.

### RENAMING OF ISLANDS

***PM has recently announced renaming of 3 islands of the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago as a tribute to Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose.***

- The Ross Island was renamed Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Dweep, the Neil Island as Shaheed Dweep and the Havelock Island as Swaraj Dweep.
- Ross Island is in the South Andaman region and 3km east from Port Blair.
- Neil Island and Havelock Island is in Ritchie's Archipelago.

### HELIUM

***A team of researchers has come up with the possibility that the mantle helium must exist as the compound  $FeO_2He$ .***

- The compound is stable and solid under the pressure and temperature conditions prevailing at those depths.
- Researchers are using a crystal search algorithm to look at possible compounds containing helium.
- It will solve the long-standing problem of where ancient helium is stored in the Earth.

### HELIUM

- Helium is the second most abundant element in the Universe, after Hydrogen.
- Its abundance is due to the very high nuclear binding energy (per nucleon) of helium.
- In its gaseous form, it is so light, and it escape from the Earth easily.
- In one of the places, it is found is in volcanic lava plumes, such as seen in Iceland and Hawaii, originating from the Earth's mantle.
- This is ancient helium from when the Earth was formed.
- It is believed to be trapped in compounds deep within the earth.

### EQUATORIAL GEOPHYSICAL RESEARCH LABORATORY

***Equatorial Geophysical Research Laboratory (EGRL), is a regional centre of the Indian Institute of Geomagnetism (IIG), Mumbai.***

- It is a multi-disciplinary centre with instruments to measure the Earth's magnetic field variations and various atmospheric parameters.
- It is trying to establish the teleconnection between distant regions of the atmosphere and their impact on regions up to 100 km height and beyond.
- It is in Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu and this facility has been continuously monitoring the Earth's near-space environment for over 25 years.
- Significance of the location - Tirunelveli is in close proximity to both the geomagnetic and geographic equator.
- When winds blow, electric currents are expected to be produced in the electrically charged upper layers of the atmosphere across the geomagnetic field.
- Over Tirunelveli and the adjoining regions, where the geomagnetic field is horizontal the current flowing primarily in the east–west direction would be enhanced.
- Scientists call this current 'Equatorial Electrojet' and probing this helps scientists understand the Sun–Earth connection.
- New facility – Another major experimental facility was recently set up to monitor secondary cosmic rays.

### SECONDARY COSMIC RAYS

- They are produced from supernovae, colliding galaxies and spinning black holes.
- When the cosmic rays from these sources enter the Earth's atmosphere, it loses its energies through collisions with our atmospheric molecules.
- As a result, it produces a cascade of subatomic particles known as secondary cosmic rays.

### HIMALAYAN GRIFFON VULTURE

***The species was recently sighted at the famous vulture habitat Panchikalpet forest range in Telangana.***

The significance of the sighting, the experts opined that Pala Rapu can become a winter migration destination for the birds from the north.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Himalayan Griffon Vultures is the largest of the genus Gyps.
- It has been listed as "Near Threatened" under IUCN Red list of threatened species and under Appendix II in CITES.
- Its habitat is mainly Terrestrial such as Rocky areas (eg. inland cliffs, mountain peaks) and Grassland.
- It is distributed from western China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan, east through the Himalayan mountain range in India, Nepal and Bhutan, to central China and Mongolia.
- It has become an almost annual, but rare, winter visitor to Thailand, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Cambodia and Thai-Malay Peninsula.
- The species population appears to be stable in Dehradun District, Uttarakhand.

- The current population trend is stable, but it is suspected that it may undergo population decline over the next 3 generations.
- It is mainly because of the impacts of diclofenac use in livestock.

### **FLIGHT & MARITIME CONNECTIVITY RULES, 2018**

***People will soon be able to make calls and access internet through their phones during air travel and ship voyage within the Indian territory as the government has notified rules for providing such services.***

Indian and foreign airlines and shipping companies operating in the country can provide in-flight and maritime voice and data services in partnership with a valid Indian telecom licence holder.

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- These rules may be called the Flight and Maritime Connectivity Rules, 2018.
- The in-flight and maritime connectivity (IFMC) can be provided using telecom networks on ground as well as using satellites.
- The services can be provided by a valid telecom licence holder in India through domestic and foreign satellites having permission of the Department of Space.
- In case of using satellite system for providing IFMC, the telegraph message shall be passed through the satellite gateway earth station located within India and such satellite gateway earth stations shall be interconnected with the NLD (national long distance) or access service or ISP licensee's network for further delivery of service.
- The IFMC services will be activated once the aircraft attains a minimum height of 3,000 metres in Indian airspace to avoid interference with terrestrial mobile networks.
- The IFMC licences will be granted against annual fee of Re 1 for a period of 10 years and the permit holder will have to pay licence fees and spectrum charges based on revenue earned from providing services.

### **HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGING SCIENCE EXPERIMENT**

***High Resolution Imaging Science Experiment (HiRISE)- A camera aboard Nasa's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter (MRO) has captured the image of the InSight lander, which recently touched down on the Red Planet.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The High-Resolution Imaging Science Experiment (HiRISE) will photograph hundreds of targeted swaths of Mars' surface in unprecedented detail.
- HiRISE operates in visible wavelengths, the same as human eyes, but with a telescopic lens that will produce images at resolutions never before seen in planetary exploration missions.
- HiRISE also makes observations at near-infrared wavelengths to obtain information on the mineral groups present.
- These new, high-resolution images will provide unprecedented views of layered materials, gullies, channels, and other science targets, as well as characterize possible future landing sites.

### **TIGER MORTALITY REPORT**

***The National Tiger Conservation Authority's (NTCA) has released a report tiger mortality in the country.***

- The NTCA maintains the official database of tiger mortality in the country, and compiles figures from reports sent by different States on the basis of recovery of bodies or seizure of body parts.
- According to the records till December 15, 2018, there were 95 cases of tiger deaths in the country. Of this, 41 cases of tiger deaths outside tiger reserves have been reported.
- Of them, 14 occurred in Maharashtra, which accounted for over 34% of all deaths outside tiger reserves in the country.
- A total of 19 tiger deaths were recorded in Maharashtra in 2018, so deaths outside tiger reserves comprise more than 70% of all tiger deaths in the State.

### **NTCA**

- The National Tiger Conservation Authority is a statutory body under the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change constituted under enabling provisions of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, as amended in 2006, for strengthening tiger conservation, as per powers and functions assigned to it under the said Act.
- The functions of NTCA are as follows:
  1. Ensuring normative standards in tiger reserve management.
  2. Preparation of reserve specific tiger conservation plan.
  3. Laying down annual/ audit report before Parliament.
  4. Instituting State level Steering Committees under the Chairmanship of Chief Minister and establishment of Tiger Conservation Foundation.
  5. According approval for declaring new Tiger Reserves.

### **VIJAY DIWAS**

***India celebrated Vijay Diwas on 16th December 2018 marking the 47th anniversary of its victory over Pakistan in the 1971 war.***

### **FACTS**

- Vijay Diwas, also called as Victory Day, is celebrated on every 16th December in India. It marks the victory of Indian armed forces over Pakistan in the war of Independence of Bangladesh from Pakistan in 1971.
- At the end of the 1971 war, the Pakistani Army unilaterally and unconditionally surrendered resulting in the independence of East Pakistan, which was called as Bangladesh.

### **MOUNT SOPUTAN VOLCANO**

***One of the most active volcanoes of Indonesia, Mount Soputan volcano, erupted recently. It is located on the Sulawesi island in Indonesia.***

- Indonesia sit along the Ring of Fire region, an area where most of the world's volcanic eruptions occur.
- The Ring of Fire has seen a large amount of activity in recent days, but Indonesia has been hit hard due to its position on a large grid of tectonic plates.
- The **Ring of Fire** is a Pacific region home to over 450 volcanoes, including three of the world's four most active volcanoes – Mount St. Helens in the USA, Mount Fuji in Japan and Mount Pinatubo in the Philippines. It is also sometimes called the circum-Pacific belt.
- Around 90% of the world's earthquakes occur in the Ring of Fire, and 80% of the world's largest earthquakes.

- The horse-shoe-shaped ring loops from New Zealand to Chile, passing through the coasts of Asia and the Americas on the way.

### **INDIAN FOREST ACT 1927**

***The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has started the process of “comprehensively amending” the backbone of forest governance in India—the Indian Forest Act, 1927 (IFA).***

The process would involve the examination of all the sections of the Act. The obsolete provisions will be weeded out and provisions fit for the present will be introduced.

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The amendments will also include definitions of terms like forests, pollution, ecological services etc.
- There is no definition of forest in any Indian law pertaining to forest or its governance. According to the 1996 Supreme Court order, the dictionary definition of the word forest is taken to be the legal definition too.
- This description covers all statutorily recognised forests, whether designated as reserved, protected or otherwise for the purpose of Section 2(i) of the Forest Conservation Act (1980).
- The term forest land, occurring in Section 2, will not only include forest as understood in the dictionary sense, but also any area recorded as forest in the government record irrespective of the ownership.
- The legal definition of forests will have huge ramifications on the conservation of forests as well as the implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.
- Earlier this year, the ministry had formed a committee, under the chairmanship of the additional director general of forests, which is mandated to work out the amendments.
- The amendments will include changes to punishments and fines prescribed in the IFA, incorporate provisions related to carbon sequestering, ecological services etc.

### **SHIKSHA SETU**

***Shiksha Setu is a mobile application launched by Haryana Government.***

Aim: To bring in Transparency in the education department and in the administration of colleges and to increase the connectivity between students, parents, teachers and administration.

### **FACTS**

- The app contains all the information related to attendance, fee online admission and scholarships in all the Haryana Government colleges.
- The details of lecturers of Government colleges and offices of the directorate can be accessed through the mobile app.
- App will provide the students with instant information about assignments and updates of important notices circulars and other programs.
- The app also provides facility of online fee payment.

**NeVA PROJECT**

***Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, gave details on the status of implementation of National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA) Project.***

It aims to bring all the legislatures of the country together, in one platform thereby creating a massive data depository without having the complexity of multiple applications.

**e-Vidhan**

- It is a Mission Mode Project (MMP) comes under the Digital India Programme.
- Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs (MoPA) is the 'Nodal Ministry' for its implementation in all the 31 States/UTs with Legislatures.
- The funding for e-Vidhan is provided by the MoPA and technical support by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MietY).
- The funding of NeVA is through Central Sponsored Scheme i.e. 60:40; and 90:10 for North East & hilly States and 100% for UTs.

**FACTS**

- Paperless Assembly or e-Assembly is a concept involving of electronic means to facilitate the work of Assembly.
- It enables automation of entire law making process, tracking of decisions and documents, sharing of information.
- Through the cloud technology (Meghraj), data deployed can be accessed anywhere at any time.
- The live webcasting of Lok Sabha TV and Rajya Sabha TV is also available on this application.
- Doordarshan has already been enabled with provision to incorporate similar facility in respect of State Legislatures.
- Himachal Pradesh is already the first Digital Legislature of the country.

**APOLLO 8 MISSION**

***NASA's Apollo 8 mission completes its 50th anniversary this year.***

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Apollo 8, the second manned spaceflight mission in the United States Apollo space program, was launched on December 21, 1968, and became the first manned spacecraft to leave low Earth orbit, reach the Moon, orbit it, and safely return.
- The three-astronaut crew—Frank Borman, James Lovell, and William Anders—became the first humans to travel beyond low Earth orbit, see Earth as a whole planet, and enter the gravity well of another celestial body.
- They were also the first humans to orbit another celestial body, see the far side of the Moon, witness and photograph an "Earthrise", escape the gravity of another celestial body (the Moon), and re-enter Earth's gravitational well.

**NABCB**

***The National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB), India's national accreditation body, has secured equivalence for its accreditation programme for Occupational Health and Safety Management Systems (OHSMS) Certification Bodies in Asia- Pacific region.***

It has signed the Multilateral Recognition Arrangement (MLA) of the Pacific Accreditation Cooperation (PAC) on 19 December 2018.

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- NABCB can facilitate export of Indian goods in the global market by attesting that these are certified as per international standards by competent certifying bodies.
- It is a constituent Board of the Quality Council of India, is responsible for accreditation of certification/inspection bodies as per applicable international standards under an international system of equivalence.
- It is the third accreditation body in the Asia-Pacific region (other two being the accreditation bodies of Hong Kong and Mexico).
- NABCB programme is based on international standards, ISO/IEC 17021-1 and ISO 45001, applicable for OHSMS.

### **ANGEL TAX**

***Over the past few weeks, several start-ups have reportedly been receiving notices from the I-T department asking them to clear taxes on the angel funding they raised, and in some cases, levying a penalty for not paying Angel Tax.***

### **ANGEL TAX**

- Angel Tax is a 30% tax that is levied on the funding received by start-ups from an external investor. However, this 30% tax is levied when start-ups receive angel funding at a valuation higher than its 'fair market value'. It is counted as income to the company and is taxed.
- The tax, under section 56(2) (vii b), was introduced by in 2012 to fight money laundering.
- The stated rationale was that bribes and commissions could be disguised as angel investments to escape taxes. But given the possibility of this section being used to harass genuine start-ups, it was rarely invoked.

### **Why is Angel tax problematic?**

There is no definitive or objective way to measure the 'fair market value' of a start-up. Investors pay a premium for the idea and the business potential at the angel funding stage. However, tax officials seem to be assessing the value of the start-ups based on their net asset value at one point. Several start-ups say that they find it difficult to justify the higher valuation to tax officials.

In a notification dated May 24, 2018, the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) had exempted angel investors from the Angel Tax clause subject to fulfilment of certain terms and conditions, as specified by the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP). However, despite the exemption notification, there are a host of challenges that start-ups are still faced with, in order to get this exemption.

### **KALIA SCHEME**

***Odisha cabinet has approved the Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) scheme, worth over Rs. 10,000 crore, for the development of farmers in the state.***

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- As per the scheme, an amount of Rs. 10,000 per family at the rate of Rs. 5,000 each for Kharif and Rabi seasons shall be provided as financial assistance for taking up cultivation.
- The assistance will be provided to take care of sustenance of farmers not able to take up cultivation due to old age, disability, disease or other reasons.
- The scheme also has a component for livelihood support for landless households. The landless households will have the option of selecting any of the units.
- The scheme, among others, will particularly benefit scheduled caste and scheduled tribe households.
- Deserving families will be identified and selected by gram panchayats. About 10 lakh households will be covered over two years under this scheme at a cost of Rs. 100 crore.
- The scheme also include life insurance cover of Rs. 2 lakh and additional personal accident cover of Rs. 2 lakh will be provided to both cultivators and landless agriculture labourers covering about 74 lakh households.

### **NATIONAL MATHEMATICS DAY**

***In India, the National Mathematics Day is observed on December 22 every year. It is celebrated in order to honour the birth anniversary of the famous mathematician Sir Srinivasa Ramanujan.***

He was the world famous mathematician who made remarkable contributions in different fields and branches of the subject mathematics.

### **SRINIVASA RAMANUJAN**

- The Srinivasa Ramanujan took birth on December 22 in the year 1887 in Erode situated in the city of today's Tamil Nadu.
- Ramanujan has greatly contributed towards mathematical analysis, number theory, infinite series and continued fractions.
- For his memorable and great contributions towards mathematics, the birth anniversary of Srinivasa Ramanujan was declared as the National Mathematics Day in the year 2012 by the then Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh.
- The year 2012 was celebrated as the National Mathematics Year across the country India for the first time.

### **KOROLEV CRATER**

- It is an icy- crater on Mars found recently.
- It was captured by European Space Agency's (ESA) Mars Express mission.
- The crater floor can reach depths of two kilometers (1.2 miles) below its rim, deeper than Earth's Grand Canyon.
- Mars Express Mission was launched back in June 2003 and entered orbit around the red planet in December of the same year. Since then, the probe has been surveying the surface of Mars using a high resolution camera as well as other tools like radars and spectrometers.

### **AGNI IV**

***Agni-IV, the Long Range Surface to Surface Ballistic Missile with a range of 4,000 kms was successfully flight tested recently.***

- The missile is developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Program.

- Agni IV is nuclear capable, with a payload capacity of one tonne of high-explosive warhead.
- The sophisticated surface-to-surface missile is equipped with modern and compact avionics to provide high level of reliability.
- The most accurate Ring Laser Gyro based Inertial Navigation System (RINS) and supported by highly reliable redundant Micro Navigation System (MINGS), ensures the vehicle reaches the target within two digit accuracy.

#### **GOVERNING COUNCIL TO BOOST MSME EXPORTS**

***The MSME Ministry has proposed to establish a governing council to ensure efficient delivery of all export-related interventions as part of its action plan to boost shipments from micro, small and medium enterprises.***

#### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The ministry has recommended a detailed analysis of various trade agreements, including FTAs and bilateral and multilateral trade agreements, to identify areas of concern for MSMEs in the strategic action plan titled '**Unlocking the Potential of MSME Exports**'.
- A study will be conducted of special economic zones and export promotion zones in the country to reassess their role and objectives as these are an essential constituent of Foreign Trade Policy and it is important to harness their potential.
- Moreover, a tech-enabled online portal shall be developed featuring country-wise list of global products and services in demand and information on how to enter specific foreign markets. It will also have details on loans and credit offered by various financial institutions.
- A formal platform may also be created by the ministry to ensure that it is involved in all bilateral and multilateral trade negotiations which have an impact on the enterprises.
- The governing council shall be chaired by Secretary, MSME and co-chaired by Development Commissioner in MSME Ministry. It shall comprise senior officials and members from MSME Ministry, Commerce Ministry, MSME Export Promotion Councils, Export Development Authorities, Commodity Boards, etc.
- As part of the action plan, National Resource Centre for MSME Exporters will engage with various international agencies including UN organisations to promote procurement from Indian MSMEs and further enhance their capabilities.

#### **INDIA'S 1<sup>ST</sup> MUSIC MUSEUM**

***The country's first music museum will be set up with assistance from the Central government in Thiruvaiyaru, Tamilnadu, the birth place of Saint Tyagaraja, one of the Trinities of Carnatic music.***

***The other two of the Trinity are Muthuswami Dikshitar and Syama Sastri.***

- Carnatic music, is a system of music commonly associated with South India, including the modern Indian states of Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil nadu as well as Sri Lanka .

- The main emphasis in Carnatic music is on vocal music; most compositions are written to be sung, and even when played on instruments, they are meant to be performed in *gyaki* (singing) style.

### **TANSEN SAMMAN**

***Noted sitar player Manju Mehta has been conferred with the 'Tansen Samman' for 2018 by the Madhya Pradesh government for her contribution in the field of music.***

- The prestigious 'National Tansen Samman' is a musical award conferred to the exponents of Hindustani music. This award carries a cash prize of Rs. 2 Lakh along with a memento.
- The Tansen Music Festival is organised every year by Madhya Pradesh culture department in the memory of Tansen, one of the greatest artists in Indian history. It is held annually in Gwalior.

### **TANSEN**

- He was a prominent figure of Hindustani classical music.
- He began his career and spent most of his adult life in the court and patronage of the Hindu king of Rewa, Raja Ramchandra Singh (1555–1592), where Tansen's musical abilities and studies gained widespread fame.
- This reputation brought him to the attention of the Mughal Emperor Akbar, who sent messengers to Raja Ramchandra Singh, requesting Tansen to join the musicians at the Mughal court.
- Akbar considered him as a Navaratnas (nine jewels), and gave him the title Mian, an honorific, meaning learned man.
- Tansen is remembered for his epic Dhrupad compositions, creating several new ragas, as well as for writing two classic books on music Sri Ganesh Stotra and Sangita Sara.

### **26<sup>TH</sup> NATIONAL CHILDREN'S SCIENCE CONGRESS**

***26th National Children's Science Congress (NCSC) is being held in Odisha.***

***Theme: "Science, Technology and Innovation for a Clean, Green and Healthy Nation."***

### **FACTS**

- National Children's Science Congress (NCSC) is a nationwide Science Communication programme started in the year 1993.
- It is a programme of National Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC), Department of Science and Technology, New Delhi.
- It is a forum for children of the age-group of 10-17 years, both from formal school system as well as from out of school, to exhibit their creativity and innovativeness and more particularly their ability to solve a societal problem experienced locally using by method of science.

### **National Council for Science and Technology Communication (NCSTC)**

- It is mandated to communicate science & technology to masses.
- The programmes of the Council aim at building capacity for informed decision making in the community.
- NCSTC encourages research in areas of S & T communication, training of communicators, development of books, manuals, posters, exhibitions, films, radio programmes, and television

programmes on different facets of science & technology and recognizing outstanding efforts through awards and incentives all over the country

- It is a registered body guided by a Board of Governors with headquarters at Delhi.
- It has about eighty members spread in all states and union territories.

### **DWIJING FESTIVAL**

***Dwijing Festival, an annual river festival, has begun on the bank of River Aie in Assam.***

- Dwijing Festival is an annual river festival celebrated in the Bodoland Territorial Area Districts (BTAD) region of Assam.
- The festival provides a platform of earning for the people in the region by putting in to focus the business activities for the better economy generation through rural tourism.
- The festival also aims to provide help to the flood victim families through charity generation and distribution.
- River Aie originates from the Himalayan Mountains of Bhutan and flows through the Chirang and Bongaigaon districts of Assam before joining the river Brahmaputra.

### **DAL LAKE**

- Also known as the summer capital of Jammu and Kashmir, dal lake, which is the second largest in the state, is integral to tourism and recreation in Kashmir and is named the “Jewel in the crown of Kashmir” or “Srinagar’s Jewel”.
- The lake is also an important source for commercial operations in fishing and water plant harvesting.
- The lake is part of a natural wetland, including its floating gardens. The floating gardens, known as “Rad” in Kashmiri, blossom with lotus flowers during July and August.
- The lake is located in the Zabarwan mountain valley, in the foothills of the Shankracharya hills, which surrounds it on three sides.
- The lake has four main interconnected basins namely, Hazratbal, Bod dal, Gagribal and Nagin.

### **BEIDOU NAVIGATION SATELLITE SYSTEM**

***China’s BeiDou Navigation Satellite System (BDS), touted as a rival to the widely-used American GPS, has started providing global services.***

- Pakistan has become the first country to use the BeiDou system ending its reliance on the Global Positioning System (GPS).
- It will be the fourth global satellite navigation system after the US GPS, Russia’s GLONASS and the European Union’s Galileo.

### **FACTS**

- Named after the Chinese term for Big Dipper, the BeiDou system started providing independent services over China in 2000.
- It is being projected by Beijing as a rival to the American Global Positioning System (GPS).
- The full constellation is scheduled to comprise 35 satellites.
- BeiDou has two separate constellations, BeiDou-1 and BeiDou-2. BeiDou-1 also known as first generation was a constellation of three satellites.
- BeiDou-2, also known as COMPASS, is the second generation of the system. It became operational in the year 2011.

*The four global GNSS systems are – GPS (US), GLONASS (Russia), Galileo (EU), BeiDou (China). Additionally, there are two regional systems – QZSS (Japan) and IRNSS or NavIC (India).*

### **SUBHASH CHANDRA BOSE AAPDA PRABANDHAN PURASKAAR**

***These are annual awards instituted recently by the Centre to recognise the excellent work done by individuals and institutions in the country in the field of disaster management.***

- Three eligible institutions and individuals will be given the 'Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskaar' every year with cash rewards ranging from Rs 5 lakh to Rs 51 lakh.
- If the awardee is an institution, it will be given a certificate and a cash prize of Rs 51 lakh and the prize money will be utilised for disaster management-related activities only.
- If the awardee is an individual, the person shall receive a certificate and a cash prize of Rs 5 lakh.
- An application by an institution does not debar any individual from that institution to apply for the award in his individual capacity.

### **ELIGIBILITY**

- Only Indian nationals and Indian institutions can apply for the award.
- For institutional awards, voluntary organisations, corporate entities, academic, research institutions, response, uniformed forces or any other institution may apply for the award.
- The applicant must have worked in the area of disaster management like prevention, mitigation, preparedness, rescue, response, relief, rehabilitation, research, innovation or early warning related work in India.
- The application must be accompanied by details of the work done in disaster management and must highlight achievements in any one or more of the areas like saving human lives, reduction in impact of disasters on lives, livestock, livelihoods, property, society, economy, or environment.
- Mobilisation and provision of resources for effective response during disasters, immediate relief work in disaster hit areas and communities, effective and innovative use of technology in any field of disaster management and disaster mitigation initiatives in hazard prone areas are some of the other criteria.

### **UJJAWALA SANITARY NAPKINS INITIATIVE**

***The Ujjwala Sanitary Napkins initiative has been launched by three oil marketing companies – IOCL, BPCL and HPCL.***

### **HIGHLIGHTS**

- The mission, which forms part of the CSR initiative of OMCs in Odisha, is aimed to educate women on female hygiene and health, improve accessibility to low cost eco-friendly sanitary pads and boost rural employment and economy.
- The three companies will set up 100 manufacturing units at the Common Service Centres (CSC) covering 93 Blocks across 30 districts of Odisha at an estimated cost of ₹2.94 crore.
- At least 10 Ujjwala beneficiary women will get employment at each CSC.
- Each facility will have a capacity to produce 1,200-2,000 pads per day and will have a sterilisation room to ensure that the napkins are sterilised before they are packed for use by rural women.
- The CSCs are also being provided with raw material, enough to make 45,000-50,000 pads. These napkins will be priced at ₹40 per pack, each containing eight pads.

- The Ujjwala pads will be made of virgin wood pulp sheet, non-woven white sheet and a gel sheet which are all biodegradable in nature and will leave minimal carbon footprint.

### **ONE DISTRICT ONE PRODUCT REGIONAL SUMMIT**

***The One District, One Product Regional Summit was held recently in Varanasi.***

- ODOP is aimed at giving a major push to traditional industries synonymous with the respective districts of the state.
- The objective of the ODOP is to optimise production, productivity and income, preservation and development of local crafts, promotion of art, improvement in product quality and skill development.

### **BACKGROUND**

ODOP is basically a Japanese business development concept, which gained prominence in 1979. It is aimed at promoting a competitive and staple product from a specific area to push sales and improve the standard of living of the local population. Over time, it has been replicated in other Asian countries as well.

UP is uniquely famous for product-specific traditional industrial hubs across 75 districts, including Varanasi (Banarasi silk sari), Bhadohi (carpet), Lucknow (chikan), Kanpur (leather goods), Agra (leather footwear), Aligarh (locks), Moradabad (brassware), Meerut (sports goods) and Saharanpur (wooden products).

### **INTERNATIONAL RICE RESEARCH INSTITUTE**

***The Prime Minister dedicated the 6th International Rice Research Institute (IRRI), South Asia Regional Center (ISARC) to the nation. The Institute is built at the campus of National Seed Research and Training Center (NSRTC) in Varanasi.***

- It will serve as a hub for rice research and training in South Asia and SAARC region.
- This first international Center in the eastern India is expected to harness and sustain rice production in the region.

### **BACKGROUND**

- The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) is an international agricultural research and training organization known for its work in developing rice varieties that contributed to the Green Revolution in the 1960s.
- The Institute, established in 1960 aims to reduce poverty and hunger, improve the health of rice farmers and consumers, and ensure environmental sustainability of rice farming.
- IRRI is one of 15 agricultural research centers in the world that form the CGIAR Consortium of International Agricultural Research centres, a global partnership of organizations engaged in research on food security.
- It is also the largest non-profit agricultural research centres in Asia.
- IRRI has successfully collaborated with Indian Council for Agricultural Research (ICAR) to introduce drought- tolerant, flood-tolerant and salt-tolerant varieties of rice in India.
- The Varanasi Centre would help increase farmers' income by enhancing and supporting rice productivity, reducing cost of production, value addition, diversification and enhancement of farmers' skills.

**CHANG'E-4**

***Chinese probe, the Chang'e-4, has entered a planned orbit "to prepare for the first-ever soft landing on the far side of the moon". China launched the Chang'e-4 probe earlier this month, carried by a Long March-3B rocket.***

**BACKGROUND**

- The Moon is tidally locked to Earth, rotating at the same rate that it orbits our planet, so the far side is never visible from Earth.
- The probe, the Chang'e-4, is expected to make the first-ever soft landing on the far side of the Moon. Previous spacecraft have seen the far side of the Moon, but none has landed on it.
- The far side of the moon known as 'South Pole-Aitken Basin' still remains a mystery among space scientists and by sending a probe there, China will outdo the historical achievements of the US and USSR.

**FACTS**

- Chang'e 4 is the fourth mission in the country's lunar mission series which is being named after the Chinese moon goddess.
- The tasks of the Chang'e-4 probe include low-frequency radio astronomical observation, surveying the terrain and landforms, detecting the mineral composition, and measuring the neutron radiation and neutral atoms to study the environment on the far side of the moon.

**REDD+**

***A new study by Delhi-based non-profit Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has revealed that Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+), the programme initiated by the United Nations in 2005 to mitigate climate change through enhanced forest management in developing countries, has largely failed to achieve its objectives.***

**BACKGROUND**

- Since its formalisation in 2006, REDD+ had emerged as the most prominent global mechanism to integrate the role of forests in climate change.
- It was touted as a win-win situation for biodiversity conservation, carbon sequestration and local livelihoods.
- More than 300 REDD+ initiatives have taken off since 2006.
- The mechanism has been enshrined in the Paris Agreement of 2015, and its implementation is transitioning from smaller, isolated projects to larger, jurisdictional programmes with support from bilateral and multilateral agencies.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- Large-scale finance for REDD+ has been a major issue as carbon markets have not materialised and international funding commitments for REDD+ have been much lower than expected.
- "REDD+ implementation costs have been high and benefits for local communities from REDD+ projects have been minimal.
- There is need to rethink the REDD+ mechanism based on these experiences and the findings emerging from new research on the potential of forests to mitigate climate change.

**INDIA**

- Complying with the UNFCCC decisions on REDD+, India has prepared its National REDD+ Strategy.
- The Strategy builds upon existing national circumstances which have been updated in line with India's National Action Plan on Climate Change, Green India Mission and India's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to UNFCCC.
- The strategy report has been prepared by Indian Council of Forestry Research & Education (ICFRE), Dehradun.

#### **REDD+**

- In simple terms, REDD+ means "Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation", conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries.
- REDD+ is a mechanism developed by Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).
- It creates a financial value for the carbon stored in forests by offering incentives for developing countries to reduce emissions from forested lands and invest in low-carbon paths to sustainable development.
- Developing countries would receive results-based payments for results-based actions. REDD+ goes beyond simply deforestation and forest degradation and includes the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.

#### **AMBUBACHI MELA**

***Ambubachi Mela is a four-day fair to mark the annual menstruation of the goddess at Kamakhya temple in Nilachal Hills in Guwahati, Assam.***

- Kamakhya temple is one of 51 shaktipeeths or seat of Shakti followers.
- Shakti peeth is originated based on the story of the death of goddess Sati.
- God Shiva who held her dead body, then started his dance of destruction, causing Sati's body to disintegrate and fall into pieces.
- The sites where these portions of Sati goddess fell, are the Shakti peeth.
- Kamakhya temple's sanctum sanctorum houses the yoni - female genital symbolised by a rock.
- Ambubachi Mela is also considered as an occasion to promote awareness on menstrual hygiene.
- This ritualistic fair is one of the reasons why the taboo associated with menstruation is less in Assam compared with other parts of India.
- Four Major Shakti Peeths in India - Jagannath Temple, Puri; Kamakhya Temple near Guwahati; Dakshina Kalika in Kolkata; Tara Tarini near Brahmapur, Odisha.

#### **AIPAN**

- It is a traditional folk art in the state of Uttarakhand.
- It is the traditional terracotta and white motifs drawn on floors and walls on ceremonial occasions.
- It consists of rhythmic geometrical patterns on a terracotta painted base.
- A tiny organisation is trying to revive the domestic interest in this traditional folk art.