

CURRENT AFFAIRS
16TH TO 31ST AUGUST 2018

DRONE TECHNOLOGY

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has been working for several years to establish a world leading drone ecosystem in India. To that end, it was necessary to develop global standard drone regulations that would permit, will appropriate safeguards, the commercial application of various drone technologies.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Drones are a technology platform which has wide-ranging applications from photography to agriculture, from infrastructure asset maintenance to insurance.
- Drones range in size from very small and those that can carry multiple kilograms of payload.
- The **Digital Sky Platform** is the first-of-its-kind national **unmanned traffic management (UTM) platform** that implements **“no permission, no take-off” (NPNT)**.
- Users will be required to do a **one-time registration** of their drones, pilots and owners.
- For every flight (exempted for the nano category), users will be required to ask for permission to fly on a mobile app and an automated process permits or denies the request instantly.
- To prevent unauthorized flights and to ensure public safety, any drone without a digital permit to fly will simply not be able to take off.
- ***The UTM operates as a traffic regulator in the drone airspace and coordinates closely with the defence and civilian air traffic controllers (ATCs) to ensure that drones remain on the approved flight paths.***

DRONE REGULATION 1.0

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation has issued today the Civil Aviation Requirements (CAR) for civil use of **Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (RPAS) commonly known as drones**. The regulation was developed after extensive consultations among various stakeholders, and will be effective from 1st December, 2018.

Drone Regulations 1.0 are intended to enable visual line-of-sight daytime-only and a maximum of 400 ft altitude operations. Air space has been partitioned into **Red Zone (flying not permitted)**, **Yellow Zone (controlled airspace)**, and **Green Zone (automatic permission)**.

FACTS

- As per the regulation, there are 5 categories of RPAS categorized by weight, namely **Nano, micro, small, medium and large**.
- All RPAS except Nano and those owned by NTRO, ARC and Central Intelligence Agencies are to be registered and issued with Unique Identification Number (UIN).
- Unmanned Aircraft Operator Permit (UAOP) shall be required for RPA operators except for Nano RPAS operating below 50 ft., micro RPAS operating below 200 ft., and those owned by NTRO, ARC and Central Intelligence Agencies.
- The mandatory equipment required for operation of RPAS except Nano category are (a) GNSS (GPS), (b) Return-To-Home (RTH), (c) Anti-collision light, (d) ID-Plate, (e) Flight controller with flight data logging capability, and (f) RF ID and SIM/ No-Permission No Take off (NPNT).

- As of now, RPAS to operate within visual line of sight (VLoS), during day time only, and up to maximum 400 ft. altitude.
- For flying in controlled Airspace, filing of flight plan and obtaining Air Defence Clearance (ADC) /Flight Information Centre (FIC) number shall be necessary.

DRONE REGULATION 2.0

The Drone Task Force under the chairmanship of the Minister of State Shri Jayant Sinha will provide draft recommendations for Drone Regulations 2.0. These regulations will examine, inter alia, the following issues:

- a) Certification of safe and controlled operation of drone hardware and software.
- b) Air space management through automated operations linked into overall airspace management framework.
- c) Beyond visual-line-of-sight operations.
- d) Contribution to establishing global standards,
- e) Suggestions for modifications of existing CARs and/or new CARs.

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF MILLETS

Indian government has written to the Director General, United Nations Food & Agriculture Organization (FAO) and proposed the declaration of an upcoming year as "International Year of Millets".

HIGHLIGHTS

- The Union Agriculture Minister stated that India is celebrating 2018 as the National Year of Millets and is promoting cultivation by amending cropping pattern of areas which are especially susceptible to climate change.
- Millets are highly nutritious and useful in various lifestyle diseases, enhancing resilience and risk management in face of climate change especially for small and marginal farmers.
- Government recently increased the MSP of millets by more than 50 per cent of cost of production which is an important component of efforts to achieve the national commitment of doubling farmers' income by 2022.

iCRAFTPT

International Conference on Recent Advances in Food Processing Technology (iCRAFTPT) got underway at Indian Institute of Food Processing Technology, Thanjavur in Tamilnadu.

CONCERNS

The bumper production and diversification of agriculture has brought in new challenges for everybody in view of the large-scale food wastage on one hand and seasonal & regional demand & there supply issues of many commodities.

INDIA'S FOOD PROCESSING SECTOR: Food processing sector in India has a dualistic structure.

- The unorganised segment dominates in numbers (about 25,00,000 in 2015-16) of small enterprises and workers, but the organised segment (about 40,000) dominates in terms of value of the output and investment.

- The percentage share of the organised/registered food processors are hardly 1.5 percent of the total food processors.

SOLUTIONS

- The ***first-tier technology*** should target the unorganized sector who can be encouraged to concentrate on primary processing and provide strong supply link to the high-end secondary and tertiary processing.
- The ***second tier*** should deal with sophistication of secondary and tertiary processing of high value products and enable industry to compete and stand up shoulder to shoulder with world food processing industries. INDIA's export basket of food produces contains 75% of the fresh F&V and unprocessed item and only 25% of processed products.

The ***Indian Institute of Food Processing Technology (IIFPT)***, a premier national Institute working under the administrative control of Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI), Government of India functioning from its headquarters in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu. Besides delivering research and education in food processing, the institute has been incubating farmers, entrepreneurs and aspiring youth for prospective food business ventures.

WHEAT GENOME

A team of international researchers, including 18 from India decoded the wheat genome.

- It is considered as a breakthrough which will help to identify genes controlling complex agronomic traits such as yield, grain quality, resistance to diseases and pests, as well as tolerance to drought, heat, water logging and salinity.
- It would accelerate the breeding of climate-resilient wheat varieties to help address global food security.
- This project was financially supported by the Department of Biotechnology, Government of India.

EXERCISE PITCH BLACK 2018

Ex Pitch Black a biennial multi-national large force employment warfare exercise was hosted by Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) from 24 Jul 18 to 18 Aug 18 in Darwin, Australia.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Indian Air Force had earlier participated in the exercise as observers and this was for the first time that IAF participated with air assets in the Exercise Pitch Black (PB-18).
- With participation of 16 nations and more than 140 aircraft, the current edition was the largest Pitch Black ever conducted by Australia.

NEW SPECIFIC HEALTH WARNING ON TOBACCO PRODUCTS PACKS

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India has notified new sets of specified health warnings for all tobacco product packs by making an amendment in the Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products (Packaging and Labelling) Rules, 2008.

"Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products (Packaging and Labelling) Second Amendment Rules, 2018". The amended Rules are applicable w.e.f. 1st September 2018.

HIGHLIGHTS

- All tobacco products manufactured or imported or packaged on or after 1st September, 2018 shall display Image 1 and those manufactured or imported or packaged on or after 1st September, 2019 shall display Image-2 (IMAGES GIVEN ON GOVERNMENT SITE).
- Any person engaged directly or indirectly in the production, supply, import or distribution of cigarettes or any tobacco products shall ensure that all tobacco product packages shall have the specified health warnings exactly as prescribed.
- Violation of the above-mentioned provisions is a punishable offence with imprisonment or fine as prescribed in Section 20 of the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003.

INDIA - SINGAPORE

India and Singapore signed the Second Protocol amending the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) in New Delhi.

- The signing of the Second Protocol, amending CECA, will boost bilateral trade between India and Singapore.
- The CECA was the first comprehensive agreement covering trade in goods, services and investments, which India had signed with any of its trading partners.
- The CECA was signed on 29th June, 2005 and its first review was concluded on 1st October, 2007.
- Singapore is the second largest trading partner of India within ASEAN and India is the largest trading partner of Singapore in South Asia.

GOVERNMENT'S PLAN OF 175GW RE BY 2022

Solar Energy Corporation of India Limited (SECI) conducted India's first auction of wind power projects in February 2017 in which tariff of Rs. 3.46 was discovered, which was much lower than feed in tariffs in vogue those days.

HIGHLIGHTS

- This was a 1000 MW bid for projects to be connected on ISTS (Inter State Transmission System) wherein power generated from one state (renewable resource rich state) could be transmitted to other renewable deficient states.
- A part capacity of 126 MW, located in Bhuj (Gujarat) was commissioned & the energy generated from this project is being purchased by Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand and UP.
- The first auction also signified a major shift from the earlier regime of state-specific feed-in-Tariff (FIT) model to a Pan-India, market-driven mechanism.
- This 126 MW ISTS project marks the beginning of capacity additions in wind power based on market discovered tariffs, in line with the Government's plan of **175 GW RE by the year 2022.**

COMPANIES ACT, 2013

The Committee constituted by Government of India is to review the existing framework dealing with offences under the Companies Act, 2013 and related matters and make recommendations to

promote better corporate compliance, has submitted its report. Injeti Srinivas chaired the committee.

The report, inter alia, makes recommendations for

- de-clogging the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) through significant reduction in compounding cases before the Tribunal.
- In addition, the report also touches upon certain essential elements related to corporate governance such as declaration of commencement of business, maintenance of a registered office, protection of depositors' interests, registration and management of charges, declaration of significant beneficial ownership, and independence of independent directors.

INDIA ENERGY EFFICIENCY SCALE-UP PROGRAMME

Government of India and the World Bank has signed \$300 million agreement for the India Energy Efficiency Program.

This is one of the several steps being taken by the Government of India to meet its climate change commitments to reduce carbon intensity by **33-35 percent by 2030.**

HIGHLIGHTS

- The program is being implemented by Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL).
- It will help scale up the deployment of energy-saving measures in residential and public sectors.
- Under the scheme, EESL will deploy LED bulbs, tubelights, ceiling fans and street lights which will be supplied by the private sector.
- It will help schemes such as UJALA (Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All) and SLNP (Street Lighting National Programme).
- This programme will help India meet its Nationally Determined Contributions under the Paris accord.
- India has set the target of avoiding additional generation capacity of 19.6 GW under National Mission for Enhanced Energy Efficiency target.
- Investments from the World Bank will help to achieve the above target and avoid lifetime greenhouse gas emissions.

UJALA and SLNP

- Under UJALA scheme, LED bulbs at 40% of the market price will be distributed to every grid connected consumer
- India Energy Efficiency Scale-Up Programme will help EESL expand UJALA's deployment of efficient ceiling fans, LED street lights and LED tube lights, along with its already-successful LED bulbs.
- SLNP scheme aims to replace conventional street light with smart and energy efficient LED street lights by March, 2019.
- Both the schemes are being implemented by EESL.

O-SMART

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for the umbrella scheme "Ocean Services, Technology, Observations, Resources Modelling and Science (O-SMART)", for implementation during the period from 2017-18 to 2019-20.

OBJECTIVES

- Strengthening of ocean observations, modelling, ocean services for fishermen.
- Setting up marine coastal observatories for tracking marine pollution in 2018.
- Setting up Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion Plant (OTEC) in Kavaratti in Lakshadweep.
- Setting up of the state-of-the-art Early Warning Systems to deal with ocean disasters like tsunami, storm surges.
- Continuation of Ocean Survey and Exploration of Minerals and Living Resources.
- Technology Development for Deep Ocean Mining- Deep Mining System and Manned Submersibles.
- Setting up Six Desalination Plants in Lakshadweep

HIGHLIGHTS

- The scheme encompasses a total of 16 sub-projects addressing ocean development activities such as ***Services, Technology, Resources, Observations and Science***.
- It aimed at stepping up ocean research and setting up early warning weather systems.
- Implementation of O-SMART will help in addressing issues relating to Sustainable Development Goal-14, which aims to conserve use of oceans, marine resources for sustainable development. This scheme (O-SMART) also provide necessary scientific and technological background required for implementation of various aspects of Blue Economy.
- The technologies developed under this Scheme will help in harnessing the vast ocean resources of both living and non-living resources from the seas.

BACKGROUND

The programs/policies of Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) are being pursued through its autonomous institutes.

During the period, several major milestones under various programs have been accomplished which include according pioneer status on deep-sea mining of ***Poly-Metallic Nodules [PMN]*** in an area of 75,000 square kilometers in the Central Indian Ocean [CIO] allotted by ***International Sea Bed Authority [ISBA]*** for exploration of PMN, allotment of 10,000 sq.km in the Indian Ocean for exploration of hydrothermal sulphides.

India's ocean related activities are now extended from the Arctic to the Antarctic region covering large ocean spaces which have been monitored through a wide spectrum of in situ and satellite-based observations. India has also established a state-of-the art early warning systems for ocean disasters, viz, tsunami, cyclones, storm surges etc., India had also signed the ***Antarctic Treaty System*** and joined ***Commission of Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR)*** for harnessing the resources.

NATIONAL REDD+ STRATEGY

Reiterating India's commitment to Paris Agreement on Climate Change, government released the 'National REDD+ Strategy of 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.

HIGHLIGHTS

- REDD+ activities will help in sustainable livelihood of local communities and also in conservation of biodiversity.
- India's National REDD+ strategy is one of the tools to achieve India's commitment to Paris Agreement.
- REDD+ strategy will help the country to fulfil its NDC commitments and will also contribute to the livelihood of the forest dependent population.,
- National Governing Council of REDD+ chaired by the Union Environment Minister at the national level and two technical committees, headed by DG, Forest Survey of India and DG.
- ICFRE are being established for supporting the REDD+ implementation in the country.
- There is need to enhance efforts for forest conservation and enhance productivity of forest eco-systems.
- The REDD+ actions at the State level will be coordinated by the committee headed by the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (PCCF) & Head of Forest Force (HOFF) of the States.

BACKGROUND

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+ aims to achieve climate change mitigation by incentivizing forest conservation.

The strategy seeks to address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and also developing a roadmap for enhancement of forest carbon stocks and achieving sustainable management of forests through REDD+ actions. The National REDD+ Strategy will soon be communicated to the UNFCCC.

Paris agreement on climate change also recognizes role of forests in climate change mitigation and calls upon country Parties to take actions to implement and support REDD+.

India has communicated in its **Nationally Determined Contribution under Paris Agreement**, that it will capture **2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of Carbon dioxide** through additional forest and tree cover by **2030**.

India's first biennial update report to UNFCCC has revealed that forests in India capture about 12% of India's total GHG emissions. Thus, forestry sector in India is making a positive cost-effective contribution for climate change mitigation.

CONSUMER PROTECTION BILL, 2018

The Bill replaces the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.

- The Bill enforces consumer rights, and provides a mechanism for redressal of complaints regarding defect in goods and deficiency in services.
- **Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions** will be set up at the District, State and National levels for adjudicating consumer complaints.
- Appeals from the District and State Commissions will be heard at the next level and from the National Commission by the Supreme Court.

- The Bill sets up a **Central Consumer Protection Authority** to promote, protect and enforce consumer rights as a class. It can issue safety notices for goods and services, order refunds, recall goods and rule against misleading advertisements.
- If a consumer suffers an injury from a defect in a good or a deficiency in service, he may file a claim of product liability against the manufacturer, the seller, or the service provider.
- The Bill defines contracts as '**unfair**' if they significantly affect the rights of consumers. It also defines unfair and restrictive trade practices.
- The Bill establishes **Consumer Protection Councils** at the district, state and national levels to render advise on consumer protection.

ANALYSIS

The Bill sets up the **Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions as quasi-judicial bodies** to adjudicate disputes. The Bill empowers the central government to appoint members to these Commissions. The Bill does not specify that the Commissions will comprise a judicial member. If the Commissions were to have members only from the executive, the principal of separation of powers may be violated.

The Bill empowers the central government to appoint, remove and prescribe conditions of service for members of the District, State and National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions. The Bill leaves the composition of the Commissions to the central government. This could affect the independence of these quasi-judicial bodies.

Consumer Protection Councils will be set up at the district, state, and national level, as advisory bodies. The State and National Councils are headed by Ministers in-charge of Consumer Affairs. The Bill does not specify whom the Councils will advise. If the Councils advise the government, it is unclear in what capacity such advice will be given.

MAHARSHI BADRAYAN VYAS SAMMAN

- There are two kinds of awards given by Indian president to language scholars - a certificate of honour and Maharishi Badrayan Vyas Samman.
- Scholars in the Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit, Arabic, Persian, Classical Oriya, Classical Malayalam, Classical Kannada and Classical Telugu languages are eligible.
- A certificate of honour is for scholars aged 60 and above.
- Maharishi Badrayan Vyas Samman is for scholars between 30-45 years of age.
- This distinction is conferred once a year on the Independence Day in recognition of substantial contribution to these languages.

CLASSICAL LANGUAGES

- As of now, six languages i.e. Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam, Odia and Sanskrit have been given the status of classical languages.
- The criteria adopted for the eligibility of a language for granting classical language status are
 - a) High antiquity of its early texts/ recorded history over a period of 1500-2000 years;
 - b) A body of ancient literature/ texts, which is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers;
 - c) The literary tradition be original and not borrowed from another speech community;
 - d) The classical language and literature being distinct from modern, there may also be a discontinuity between the classical language and its later forms or its offshoots.

ADVANTAGES

- A one-time grant of Rs 100 crore for research and development of the language.
- Two major annual international awards for scholars of eminence in the concerned language.
- Setting up of a 'Centre of Excellence for Studies in Classical Languages' can be set up.
- The University Grants Commission can be requested to create, to start with at least in Central Universities, a certain number of professional chairs for classical languages, for scholars of eminence in the concerned language.

GLOBAL LIVEABILITY INDEX 2018

- In this year's Global Liveability Index 2018, Vienna displaces Melbourne as the most liveable city in the world.
- It is the first time that a European city has topped the rankings of the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) annual survey
- The other top 10 cities are Melbourne, Osaka, Calgary, Sydney, Vancouver, Tokyo, Toronto, Copenhagen and Adelaide.
- Syrian capital of Damascus continues to be ranked at the bottom, Dhaka in Bangladesh is the second worst and Karachi in Pakistan is the fourth worst.
- Indian cities Delhi and Mumbai ranked at 112 and 117 respectively.
- This index is in contrast with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs' Ease of Living Index for 111 Indian cities wherein Mumbai ranked at number 3, far ahead of New Delhi at a low 65th rank.

BACKGROUND

- The index is released by Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), research and analysis wing of "The Economist" group, headquartered in London.
- It ranks 140 global cities based on their living conditions.
- It quantifies the challenges that might be presented to an individual's lifestyle in the cities worldwide.
- The index assigns cities scores on five broad parameters such as stability, healthcare, culture/environment, education, and infrastructure using 30 indicators.

SOUTH PARS

- South Pars is the world's single largest natural gas field located in Iran.
- It is being developed in several phases with foreign collaboration.
- French Energy company had previously held 80% of the stake in this project.
- But following the US sanctions, it has reduced its shares.
- China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC), the world's third-largest oil and gas firm has replaced French company's stake.

INTERNAL COMPLAINTS COMMITTEE

Recently, the Corporate Affairs Ministry has amended the Companies (Accounts) Rules, 2014, which mandates companies to disclose whether they have constituted an ICC.

HIGHLIGHTS

Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 makes it mandatory for the constitution of Internal Complaints Committee (ICC).

- ICC will probe sexual harassment allegations at workplaces.
- It is mandatory for any organisation with 10 or more employees to constitute an ICC.
- An employer who doesn't do so could face a fine of up to Rs. 50,000.
- An ICC should consist of
 - a) A presiding officer, who is a woman employee at a senior level in the same organisation,
 - b) At least two employees "preferably committed to the cause of women", and
 - c) A member from an NGO or a person "familiar with issues relating to sexual harassment."
 - d) The committee would have powers similar to those of a civil court and would have to complete its inquiry within 90 days.

RUCO INITIATIVES

Repurpose Used Cooking Oil (RUCO) is an initiative launched by The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI).

- It will enable collection and conversion of used cooking oil to bio-diesel.
- Under this initiative, 64 companies at 101 locations have been identified to enable collection of used cooking oil.
- FSSAI is also working in partnership with Biodiesel Association of India and the food industry to ensure effective compliance of used cooking oil regulations.
- The cooking oil regulation mandates that the maximum permissible limits for Total Polar Compounds (TPC) have been set at 25 per cent, beyond which the cooking oil is unsafe for consumption.
- TPC is one of the reliable variables to keep track of the changes in quality of oil during frying process
- The repeated use of oil at high temperatures result in oxidative, polymerization and thermal degradation reactions.
- These reactions will lead to changes in their physical, chemical, nutritional and sensory properties which increases the TPC of oil.

INDIA'S 1ST PENGUIN

- India's first penguin was born in Byculla zoo in Mumbai.
- It belongs to the category of Humbolt Penguin, named after cold water current in the coastal areas of Chile and Peru in South America.
- The species is listed as "Vulnerable" in IUCN list of threatened species.
- In 2016, 8 humbolt penguins were imported to Mumbai from South Korea for captive breeding.

RESTRICTED AREAS PERMIT

Union Home Ministry has recently excluded Andaman & Nicobar Islands from the Restricted Area Permit (RAP) till December 31, 2022.

It was notified subject to condition such as,

- a) Citizens of Afghanistan, China and Pakistan would continue to require RAP to visit the UT.

- b) Citizens of Myanmar will continue to require RAP, which shall be issued only with the prior approval of the Home ministry.
- c) Separate approvals of the competent authority would be required for visiting reserved forests, wildlife sanctuaries and tribal reserves.

BACKGROUND

- Under the Foreigners (Restricted) Areas Order, 1963, entire Andaman & Nicobar Islands and part of the Sikkim State have been declared as 'Restricted' Areas.
- A foreign national (except Bhutan) is not normally allowed to visit the restricted areas.
- They require a special permit from the competent authority delegated with powers to issue such a special permit or from Ministry of Home affairs.
- Some areas are notified by the Union Government from time to time that allows foreigners to visit restricted areas with a view to promote tourism.

UPI 2.0

Unified Payment Interface is a platform created by the National Payments Corporation (NPCI) to facilitate faster and smoother digital payments.

- It allows a customer to pay directly from a bank account to another bank account & different merchants, both online and offline, without the hassle of typing credit card details, IFSC code, or net banking/wallet passwords.
- UPI 2.0 is an upgraded version with several new features added to UPI.
- It allows scheduling payment transfers at a later date with pre-authorisation.
- It allows customers to link their overdraft (OD) account with UPI. In the Earlier version, only current and savings account can be linked.
- It will also let users verify UPI credentials using a QR code.
- Customers can now receive invoices from merchants directly in the inbox to verify the authenticity of credentials.

INTERNATIONAL NITROGEN INITIATIVES

- International Nitrogen Initiative was established in 2003 under sponsorship of the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE) and International Geosphere-Biosphere Program (IGBP).
- The key aims of the INI are,
 - a) To optimize nitrogen's beneficial role in sustainable food production.
 - b) To minimize nitrogen's negative effects on human health and the environment resulting from food and energy production.
- The INI holds a conference every three years to discuss ideas and exchange knowledge on nitrogen issues.

BACKGROUND

- The last INI conference was held in Melbourne, in December 2016, adopting Melbourne declaration.
- The next INI conference will be held in Berlin, Germany, in 2020.
- The 5th International Nitrogen Conference in 2010 (N2010) was organized by INI and its South Asia regional centre in New Delhi.

- N2010 enabled INI to bring together its contributions to the Global Nitrogen Assessment.
- Under this, Indian Nitrogen Group has released “The Indian Nitrogen Assessment”, India’s first-ever such attempt to study nitrogen pollution.
- INI is coordinated by a Steering Committee, led by a chair and six regional centre directors representing, Africa, Europe, Latin America, North America, South Asia and East Asia.

ADVANCED MEDIUM COMBAT AIRCRAFT

- It is India’s next indigenous fighter and expected to make its first flight by 2032.
- It is built under India’s only fifth generation aircraft programme.
- The aircraft will feature geometric stealth which is different from material stealth feature.
- In material stealth, radar-absorbing materials are used to absorb the radio waves thus reducing the radar footprint.
- Whereas, in geometric stealth, the aircraft is designed at such angles to deflect away maximum radar waves to minimise radar cross section.
- Thus, the fighter will have low radar cross section, making it difficult for the enemy to spot it.

SMART ANTI-AIRFIELD WEAPON

It was recently flight tested from Indian Air Force’s Jaguar aircraft successfully.

FACTS

- It is an indigenously developed light weight glide bomb, capable of targeting large enemy infrastructure, like airfields.
- It is an accurate bomb and is termed a precision-guided munition (PGM).
- It has “Inertial navigation system” which guides it precisely to its target, typically an enemy airfield up to 100 km away.
- This precisely guided one bomb is more economical than traditional free fall bombs which are less accurate.
- It has another advantage that it can release the bomb at a safer distance to enemy airfield and return without exposing itself to enemy anti-aircraft defences.

HELINA

HELINA is an acronym for “Helicopter Launched Nag” missile.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Nag is a third generation Anti-Tank guided missile indigenously developed under “Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP)” of DRDO.
- Anti-Tank Guided Missiles are primarily designed to hit and destroy heavily armoured military vehicles.
- Helina is the helicopter launch variant of Nag, that can be fired from Dhruv advanced light helicopter and HAL Rudra attack helicopter.
- It is a heavier and longer-range version of the vehicle mounted Nag missile with a 7-km range.
- Typically, a land version of Nag missile has a range of only 4 km.
- The missile is guided by “infrared imaging seeker”, that homes in on the target’s heat signature.
- IGMDP involves the development of Agni, Akash, Trishul, Prithvi and Nag missiles.

HILSA

- It is the most priced variety of fish, originates in the coastal waters of Myanmar.
- It travels to the mouth of the Ganga in West Bengal, Padma and Meghna rivers in Bangladesh to lay eggs in fresh water during the monsoon.
- It is a sensitive species and its breeding ground is mostly concentrated at the confluence of river and oceanic waters.
- After breeding in freshwater, the fish makes its way to seawater by undertaking a return journey to the confluence points.
- It belongs to the family of Clupeidae.
- It is known as “King of Fish” due to its soft oily texture and flavour.

CRYPTOCURRENCY PETRO

Venezuela has recently announced a single exchange rate based on its cryptocurrency.

- Petro is a cryptocurrency launched by the government earlier this year.
- The President has effectively devaluated the petrocurrency by 96 per cent.
- Exchange rates, salaries, pensions and prices are pegged to Petro.
- Now, one petro would equal \$60 and have the equivalent of 360 million bolivars (official currency of Venezuela).
- Since 2003 Venezuela has had strict currency controls, identified by economists as a major cause of its economic crisis.
- It has led to hyperinflation and rendered the bolivar currency near worthless.
- The International Monetary Fund has predicted that inflation in Venezuela would hit 1 million percent this year.

PRADHAN MANTRI AWAS YOJANA

PMAY aims at helping people below the poverty-line (BPL) in construction of dwelling units and upgradation of existing unserviceable kutcha houses through assistance in the form of full grant.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Government will soon introduce provision of ‘lock-in’ period of five years for the houses purchased under PMAY.
- Those who have purchased houses will not be able to sell properties within 5 years of buying to avoid the misuse of the scheme.
- Beneficiaries are people belonging to SCs/STs, freed bonded labourers and non-SC/ST categories, widows or next-of-kin of defence personnel killed in action, ex-servicemen and retired members of the paramilitary forces, Disabled persons and Minorities.

PMAY – G

- Government aims to construct 1 crore pucca (permanent) houses for the rural poor by 2019.
- Beneficiaries would be chosen based on the according to data taken from the Socio-Economic Caste Census of 2011.
- Under ***PMAY – Urban***, Government envisions ***“Housing for All” by 2022.***
- Beneficiaries – Urban poor who does not own a pucca house, Economically Weaker Section (EWS), Middle Income Groups (MIG) and Lower Income Groups (LIG).

- Credit Linked Subsidy Scheme is an interest subsidy available to a loan amounts up to 2 lakhs at the rate of 4% (6 to 9 lakhs) and 3% (9 to 12 lakhs).
- It is for purchase/construction/extension/improvement of house to cater EWS/LIG/MIG.

NABH NIRMAN SCHEME

- NABH (NextGen Airports for BHarat) Nirman is an initiative by the Ministry of Civil Aviation.
- Under the scheme, the government proposed to expand airport capacity by more than five times to handle a billion trips a year.
- The three aspects of NABH Nirman are building of airport capacity through,
 - a) Fair and equitable land acquisition.
 - b) Long-term master plan for airport and regional development.
 - c) Balanced economics for all stakeholders.

NATIONAL CALAMITY

There is no provision in the law or rules for the government to designate a disaster as a “national calamity”.

- The funding for disaster relief are governed by the National Disaster Management Policy.
- As per the policy, the State governments have to provide disaster relief from their respective State Disaster Response Funds (SDRFs).
- Additional assistance will be provided from the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) only for a “calamity of severe nature”.

NDRF - The NDRF is funded through a National Calamity Contingent Duty levied under GST for selected goods and contribution from any person or institutions.

SDRF - It is contributed by the Union government and the respective State governments in a 75:25 ratio for general category States and 90:10 for Special Category States. The allocation of the SDRF for each State is done by the Finance Commission, and the Centre contributes its specified share each financial year.

TRIFED

Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India Limited (TRIFED) has made record procurement of tribal products during the current financial year.

There is an increase of 511% in procurement in comparison to the corresponding period of the last financial year.

- It is a national level apex organization functioning under the administrative control of Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- The objective of TRIFED is socio-economic development of tribal people by undertaking marketing development of the tribal products.
- It serves the interest of Tribal people by ensuring better remunerative price for their Minor Forest Produce and tribal art and handicraft products.
- It is also engaged in skill up gradation and capacity building to develop the marketing of Minor Forest Produce.

- Its approach involves exploring marketing possibilities for products in national as well as international markets, brand building & creating opportunities for marketing on sustainable basis.

IMPORT POLICY AMENDED BY GOVERNMENT

Central Government has recently amended the Import policy, imposing restrictions on bio-fuel imports.

- The free import of biofuels will now be allowed only for non-fuel purposes.
- The restricted biofuels will include ethyl alcohol and other denatured spirits, biodiesel, petroleum oils and oils obtained from bituminous minerals other than crude.
- The import of above items, which was free earlier, will now be allowed only for non-fuel purposes on an actual user basis.
- The government in its recent notification has revised the status of export of rare earth compounds.
- Export of rare earth compounds classified as beach sand minerals, permitted anywhere in the export policy earlier, will be regulated now.
- It has been brought under state trading enterprise and will be canalised through Indian Rare Earths Limited.

NATIONAL LOGISTIC PORTAL

- The portal is being developed by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- It is a digital platform to bring all stakeholders in the logistics sector on board to cut down transaction cost and time for businesses.
- It will act as a single window online market place for trade.
- Stakeholders like traders, manufacturers, logistics service providers, infrastructure providers, financial services, government departments and groups and associations will all be on one platform.
- There are four main components of the portal - logistics e-market place, logistics certification platform, integrated regulatory platform and banking and financial services platform.
- The portal is developed to achieve the government's target of reducing the logistics cost from the present 14% of GDP to less than 10% by 2022.

6TH INTERNATIONAL BUDDHIST CONCLAVE 2018

The 6th International Buddhist conclave was recently inaugurated in New Delhi by the President.

- The conclave aims to showcase the Buddhist heritage in India and boost tourism in the country.
- Delegates from 29 countries are participating in the conclave.
- It has been organised by the Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with State Governments of Maharashtra, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh.
- The conclave is going to be held in New Delhi, Ajanta (Maharashtra).
- Site visits to Rajgir, Nalanda and Bodhgaya (Bihar) and Sarnath (Uttar Pradesh) will also be conducted.

5G PANEL

A steering committee headed by Paulraj was formed by the government last year to make fifth-generation (5G) telecommunication services successful in India.

- Its mandate is to formulate a road map for 5G services in India.
- The committee has revealed that the advent of next-generation wireless services may unleash USD 1 trillion economic opportunity for the country.
- Under the spectrum policy, the committee has suggested that India's spectrum allocation for public wireless services should be enhanced significantly.
- It has also asked for setting up a Standing Committee with five-year term to advise on building spectrum technology infrastructure.
- While the US is likely to deploy 5G services later this year, or in the first quarter of 2019, the India rollout may begin by 2020.

Bond-i

Bond-i, an acronym standing for Blockchain Offered New Debt Instrument is the world's first public bond created and managed using only blockchain.

- It is launched by World Bank and the Commonwealth Bank of Australia is the sole manager of the deal.
- The total worth of the bond is 100 million Australian Dollars.
- It is viewed as an initial step in moving bond sales away from manual processes towards faster and cheaper automation.
- World Bank's bonds hold an AAA rating, creating a new bond markets and also engineers new methods to sell and trade securities.
- Blockchain technology refers to the distributed ledger technology that securely records all transactions made on the chain.
- This can help simplify raising capital and trading securities, improve operational efficiencies and enhance regulatory oversight.

BLOCKCHAIN

Blockchains are a new data structure that is secure, cryptography-based, and distributed across a network. The technology supports cryptocurrencies such as Bitcoin, and the transfer of any data or digital asset. Spearheaded by Bitcoin, blockchains achieve consensus among distributed nodes, allowing the transfer of digital goods without the need for centralized authorisation of transactions. The present blockchain ecosystem is like the early Internet, a permission less innovation environment in which email, the World Wide Web, Napster, Skype, and Uber were built.

- A block is the "current" part of a blockchain which records some or all of the recent transactions, and once completed, goes into the blockchain as permanent database.
- Each time a block gets completed, a new block is generated.
- Blocks are linked to each other (like a chain) in proper linear, chronological order with every block containing a hash of the previous block.

BENEFITS

- As a public ledger system, blockchain records and validate each and every transaction made, which makes it secure and reliable.
- All the transactions made are authorized by miners, which makes the transactions immutable and prevent it from the threat of hacking.
- Blockchain technology discards the need of any third-party or central authority for peer-to-peer transactions.
- It allows decentralization of the technology.

FAME INDIA SCHEME

- FAME India Scheme [Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India] was launched in 2015.
- Its objective is to support hybrid/electric vehicles market development and Manufacturing ecosystem.
- The FAME India Scheme is aimed at incentivising all vehicle segments i.e. 2 Wheeler, 3 Wheeler Auto, Passenger 4 Wheeler Vehicle, Light Commercial Vehicles and Buses.
- It has 4 focus areas i.e. Technology development, Demand Creation, Pilot Projects and Charging Infrastructure.
- The phase I of FAME expires on March 31, 2018.
- In phase II, the government is targeting a fully (100%) electric fleet for public transport, including buses, taxis and auto-rickshaws.
- An inter-ministerial panel has recently finalised the roadmap for the II phase spanning over five years and subsidy support for all types of electric vehicles.
- At present, the incentive is being offered on purchase of strong hybrid and electric cars, two-wheelers and three-wheelers.
- The panel decided to offer subsidy to all categories of electric vehicles, including two-wheelers, three-wheelers and four-wheelers.

NATIONAL MISSION FOR MANUSCRIPT

- National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM) is developing an app to make 3 lakhs manuscripts online accessible.
- NMM was set up in 2003 by the Ministry of Tourism and Culture to identify, document, conserve, digitise and publish Indian manuscripts.
- A manuscript is a handwritten composition on paper, bark, cloth, metal, palm leaf or any other material dating back at least seventy-five years that has significant scientific, historical or aesthetic value.
- NMM is working towards fulfilling its motto, 'conserving the past for the future'.
- India possesses an estimate of 10 million manuscripts, probably the largest collection in the world, which covers a variety of themes, textures and aesthetics, scripts, languages, calligraphies, illuminations and illustrations.

BIODIVERSITY HERITAGE SITE

The Tamil Nadu State Biodiversity Board has initiated steps to identify and declare Biodiversity Heritage Sites (BHS).

HIGHLIGHTS

- BHS are well defined areas that are unique, ecologically fragile ecosystems.
- Under Biological Diversity Act, 2002 (BDA), the State Government in consultation with local bodies may notify in the official gazette, areas of biodiversity importance as Biodiversity Heritage Sites (BHS).
- The State Government in consultation with the Central Government may frame rules for the management and conservation of BHS.
- The National Biodiversity Authority (NBA) issues the guidelines for selection and management of the BHS.
- It covers terrestrial, coastal and inland waters and, marine ecosystems having rich biodiversity.
- Ameenpur lake in Telangana is the first waterbody in the country to be declared as a BHS.

QUAD GROUPING

Report on stability was recently launched by four think tanks from the Quad countries at the Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF).

HIGHLIGHTS

- The report was published by ***Quadripartite Commission on Indian Ocean Regional Security***, which put out a series of 20 policy recommendations for stability in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- Indo-Pacific Quadrilateral is a closed group consisting of India, Australia, Japan & USA.
- Japan pioneered the initiative about a decade ago as a coalition of maritime democracies.
- Securing a rules-based global order, liberal trading system and freedom of navigation are believed to be the guiding principles.
- It aims to contain a rising China and its “predatory” economic and trade policies.
- The purpose is also to provide alternative debt financing for countries in the Indo-Pacific region.
- It recommended that the four countries should work to oppose the establishment of permanent Chinese military bases in the IOR.

G20

G20 Digital Economy Ministerial Meeting was recently held at Salta, Argentina.

This event took place as part of G20 Leaders’ summit, which is going to be held at the end of 2018.

It is going to be hosted by Argentina under the theme “***Building consensus for fair and sustainable development***”.

FACTS

- Under the Turkish presidency in 2015, G20 leaders recognized the modern period as a critical era of digital transformation.
- The Digital Economy Task Force (DETF) was established under the 2017 German presidency, based on the decision adopted in Hangzhou in 2016 under the Chinese Presidency.
- DETF will meet twice in a year to provide recommendations for inclusive development in the era of digital transformation.

G20

- The G20 was born out of a meeting of G7 finance ministers and central bank governors in 1999 who saw a need for a more inclusive body with broader representation to have a stronger impact on addressing the world's financial challenges.
- The G20 is made up of 19 countries and the European Union.
- In 2008, amidst the global financial crisis, the world saw a need for new consensus-building at the highest political level. Since then, the G20 summits have been attended by heads of state or government, and the G20 was instrumental in stabilizing the world economy. Since then, its agenda has expanded to include additional issues affecting financial markets, trade, and development.
- The work of the G20 is generally divided into two tracks:
 - a) The **Finance track** comprises all meetings with G20 finance ministers and central bank governors and their deputies. Convening several times throughout the year, they focus on financial and economic issues, such as monetary, fiscal and exchange rate policies, infrastructure investment, financial regulation, financial inclusion and international taxation.
 - b) The **Sherpa track** focuses on broader issues such as political engagement, anti-corruption, development, trade, energy and climate change, gender equality, among others. Each G20 country is represented at these meetings by its relevant minister, and by its designated sherpa, or emissary. The sherpa engages in planning, negotiation and implementation tasks on behalf of the leader of their respective country. Each sherpa orients their minister and head of state or government accordingly on the progress of the G20, and delegates the dialogue and topics to relevant working groups.

PERSONAL LAWS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2018

The Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018 was recently introduced in the Lok Sabha. Also, Supreme Court has been hearing a petition to uphold the rights of people with leprosy and the repeal of discriminatory laws.

ISSUES

- Over 110 Central and State laws discriminate against leprosy patients.
- These laws stigmatise and isolate leprosy patients and are coupled with age-old beliefs about leprosy.
- Now, modern medicine, especially multi-drug therapy, completely cures the disease.
- In independent India, the law has been an instrument for social change. Nevertheless, the process of removing the discrimination has been worryingly slow.
- Recent developments signals hope at removing discrimination in law and society against the leprosy-affected.

HIGHLIGHTS

The Personal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018, attempts to end the discrimination against leprosy persons in various central laws:

- a) The Divorce Act, 1869
- b) The Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, 1939

- c) The Special Marriage Act, 1954
- d) The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
- e) The Hindu Adoptions and Maintenance Act, 195
- f) The Bill eliminates leprosy as a ground for dissolution of marriage or divorce.
 - The amendments omit the provisions which stigmatise and discriminate against leprosy-affected persons. The Bill is meant to provide for the integration of leprosy patients into the mainstream.

PM-STIAC

Prime Minister's Science, Technology and Innovation Advisory Council (PM-STIAC) is a 21-member panel.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Scientific Advisory Committees (SAC) - Cabinet and SAC-PM are dissolved and replaced by PM-STIAC.
- It will advise the Prime Minister on all matters related to S&T, innovation and monitor the implementation of PM's vision on the same.
- It is expected to act as a high-level advisory body to several ministries and execute mission-oriented programmes.
- It will be chaired by the government's Principal Scientific Advisor.
- Secretaries of various scientific ministries such as education, environment and health would be 'special invitees' to the council meetings.

INDIAN OCEAN CONFERENCE

The 3rd edition of Indian Ocean Conference was organised recently in Hanoi, Vietnam.

The theme of this year's conference is '***Building Regional Architectures***', particularly with regards to trade and commerce, security and governance.

- It is an initiative to bring the state leaders, diplomats and bureaucrats from across the Indian ocean region under one roof to strengthen the understanding among each other.
- It is organised by India Foundation, an independent research centre along with the partners from Singapore, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.
- Earlier, the conference was held in Singapore and Sri Lanka in 2016 and 2017 respectively.

NON-ATTAINMENT CITIES

Non-attainment cities are those cities marked by Central Pollution Control Board that have fallen short of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for PM 10 and NO2 over 5 years.

HIGHLIGHTS

- There are 94 non-attainment cities in the country.
- These cities were asked as part of the National Clean Air Campaign (NCAP) to implement measures aimed at mitigating air pollution.
- The measures include control and mitigation measures related to vehicular emissions, re-suspension of road dust and other fugitive emissions, bio-mass, municipal solid waste burning, industrial pollution, and construction and demolition activities.

- The aim of pollution mitigation measures was to cut overall pollution in these cities by 35% in the next three years.

NATIONAL AMBIENT AIR QUALITY STANDARDS (NAAQS)

Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act empowers Central Pollution Control Board to set standards for the quality of air.

HIGHLIGHTS

- AAQS were notified by CPCB in the year 2009.
- Pollutants covered under NAAQS are Sulphur Dioxide (SO₂), Nitrogen Dioxide (NO₂), Particulate Matter (PM 10, PM 2.5), Ozone (O₃), Lead (Pb), Carbon Monoxide (CO), Ammonia (NH₃), Benzene (C₆H₆), Benzo(a)Pyrene (BaP), Arsenic(As), Nickel (Ni).

National Air Quality Index

- NAQI, launched by CPCB, is a number used to communicate to the public how polluted the air currently is or how polluted it is forecasted to become.
- The classifications of air quality are part of a 6 grade, colour coded taking into account 8 pollutant levels.
- These pollutants are:
 1. Ground-level Ozone or O₃
 2. Particulate Matter (soot and dust) - PM 2.5 and PM 10
 3. Carbon Monoxide or CO
 4. Sulphur Dioxide or SO₂ and
 5. Nitrogen Dioxide or NO₂
 6. Ammonia or NH₃

INTERNATIONAL ENERGY AGENCY

Ministry of Science and Technology and the International Energy Agency (IEA) has recently signed a MoU on Enhancing Innovation for Clean Energy Transition.

HIGHLIGHTS

- It seeks to deepen co-operation in support of clean energy innovations to accelerate the R&D of clean energy technologies in India.
- The agreement will be coordinated by Mission Innovation India Unit set up by Department of Biotechnology.

IEA

- IEA is a Paris-based autonomous intergovernmental organization established in the framework of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).
- Only OECD member states can become members of the IEA.
- Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Morocco, Singapore and Thailand are the associate members of IEA.
- The IEA acts as a policy adviser to its member states, but also works with non-member countries, especially China, India, and Russia.
- Its flagship releases are World Energy Outlook and Key World Energy Statistics.

ARIIA

Atal Ranking of Institutions on Innovation Achievements (ARIIA) is a new annual ranking of higher educational institutions.

- It will be based on innovation and will be launched on October 15, the birth anniversary of former President APJ Abdul Kalam.
- It will work parallel to National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) published annually.
- NIRF focuses on research (New knowledge) and ARIIA focuses on innovation (Puts the new knowledge to use).
- ARIIA takes in to account innovation ecosystems supported through teaching and learning, innovative solutions to improve governance of the institution, revenues generated and ideas of entrepreneurship.

MPLAD SCHEME

The 21st All India Review Meeting on Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) was recently held under the Chairmanship of Union Minister of Statistics & Program Implementation.

CONCERN

The major problems being faced in the implementation of the Scheme at the District level include: Non-submission of requisite documents in time to the Ministry such as Audit Certificate, Utilization Certificate, Provisional Utilization Certificate, Monthly Progress Report, Bank Statement and Online Monthly Progress Report.

MPLAD SCHEME

- It was launched in December, 1993, to provide a mechanism for the Members of Parliament to recommend works of developmental nature for creation of durable community assets and for provision of basic facilities including community infrastructure, based on locally felt needs.
- Funds are released in the form of grants in-aid directly to the district authorities.
- The funds released under the scheme are non-lapsable.
- The liability of funds not released in a particular year is carried forward to the subsequent years, subject to eligibility.
- The MPs have a recommendatory role under the scheme. They recommend their choice of works to the concerned district authorities who implement these works by following the established procedures of the concerned state government.
- The district authority is empowered to examine the eligibility of works sanction funds and select the implementing agencies, prioritise works, supervise overall execution, and monitor the scheme at the ground level.
- The Lok Sabha Members can recommend works in their respective constituencies.
- The elected members of the Rajya Sabha can recommend works anywhere in the state from which they are elected. Nominated members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha may select works for implementation anywhere in the country.

REPORT 'WRONGFUL PROSECUTION (MISCARRIAGE OF JUSTICE: LEGAL REMEDIES'

The Law Commission of India has submitted its Report titled 'Wrongful Prosecution (Miscarriage of Justice): Legal Remedies' to the Government of India.

BACKGROUND

The High Court of Delhi in the *case of Babloo Chauhan* had expressed grave concern about the state of innocent persons being wrongfully prosecuted, incarcerated for crimes that they did not commit. The Court highlighted the urgent need for a legislative framework for provided relief and rehabilitation to victims of wrongful prosecution, incarceration and asked the Law Commission to undertake a comprehensive examination of the aforesaid issued and make a recommendation thereon to the Government of India.

HIGHLIGHTS

- This report looks at the issue from the context of Indian Criminal Justice system and recommends 'wrongful prosecution' to be the standards of miscarriage of justice, as against 'wrongful conviction' and 'wrongful incarceration'.
- The Report gives an overview of the remedies available under the existing laws and discusses their inadequacies.
- The Commission recommends enactment of a specific legal provision for redressal of cases of wrongful prosecution – to provide relief to the victims of wrongful prosecution in terms of monetary and non-monetary compensation (such as counselling, mental health services, vocational / employment skills development etc.) within a statutory framework.
- The Report enumerates the core principles of the recommended framework- defining 'wrongful prosecution' i.e., cases in which claim for compensation can be filed, designation of a Special Court to decide these claims of compensation, nature of proceedings – timeline for deciding the claim, etc., financial and other factors to be considered while determining the compensation, provisions for interim compensation in certain cases, removal of disqualification on account of wrongful prosecution / conviction etc.
- A draft Bill is also annexed with the Report as the **Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill, 2018.**

SAARC AGRI COOPERATIVE BUSINESS FORUM

The first South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Agri Cooperative Business Forum was held recently in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Theme: '**Organizing and Strengthening Family Farmers'** Cooperatives to attain the Sustainable-Development-Goals-1 and 2 in South Asia'.

- Organized by **Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)** of United Nations and Asian Farmers' Association with the support from International Fund for Agricultural Development.
- To provide platform to bring together representatives both from government and non-governmental entities from member states of SAARC as well as from regional and international organizations.

SAARC

- SAARC stands for **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation.**

- It is a geopolitical cooperation maintained for mutual benefits between eight south Asian nations: ***India, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Maldives.***
- SAARC Secretariat is based in Kathmandu. It is responsible for monitoring the activities of the cooperation.
- The body was founded in Dhaka in 1985.

SAFTA

SAARC nations unanimously decided to form ***South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA)***. Although the agreement was reached at the 12th SAARC summit in 2004, it came into force on 1 January 2006. The agreement not only created a free trade area of 1.8 billion people in SAARC nations (except Afghanistan), but also removed trade barriers to increase the level of economic cooperation.

NILIGIRI TAHR

A recent census has revealed that the population of the Nilgiri tahr (an endangered mountain goat) at the Mukurthi National Park has grown by 18% in the last two years, from 480 to 568.

The population faces several threats. Researchers point to the continuing spread of invasive species of flora, such as wattle and pine, and exotic weeds like scotch broom (*Cystisus scoparius*) and gorse, which end up diminishing grazing land.

- IUCN status- Endangered.
- It is listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972.
- Endemic to the Nilgiri Hills and the southern portion of the Western Ghats in the states of Tamil Nadu and Kerala in Southern India.
- It is the State animal of Tamil Nadu.

PROJECT NAVLEKHA

Google has unveiled Project Navlekha to make online content relevant for more Indian users especially in local languages.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Navlekha in Sanskrit means “a new way to write.”
- Google is using its expertise in artificial intelligence for Project Navlekha, using which, it will quickly render any PDF with Indian language content into editable text, overcoming issues that usually occur when you try to copy text in Indian languages from a PDF.
- The project aims to bring 135,000 local language publishers online by making web hosting smooth and simple.
- It will allow local publishers who do not have websites to make their offline content fit for online publishing in less than a minute.
- It also comprises tool that uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to allow publishers to simply scan documents or PDFs and create instant web pages on the platform.
- The project will provide a handy online publishing tool for local language newspapers and content companies—90% of which do not have a website.
- The registered publishers on Navlekha will also be provided with free web hosting, along with a branded domain for three years. They’ll also have AdSense support to begin monetising their content.

- Under Navlekha project, Google will help these publishers to receive training and support and a branded page domain for the first three years.

At present, amount of online content in Indian languages is only 1% of what is available in English. India is important market for Google as it has second largest population of internet users in the world. Hence, with the new project the amount of resources available for Indians in local languages will increase.

MOB LYNCHING

A panel headed by Union Home Secretary Rajiv Gauba, which deliberated on measures to check incidents of lynching, submitted its report to a Group of Ministers headed by Home Minister.

As per the suggestion made, media platforms — Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and Twitter — would be made accountable for not blocking such malicious posts/videos when brought to their notice and “FIR could be lodged against their country heads” for non-compliance of government orders and they could be prosecuted under law.

SUPREME COURT DIRECTIONS

- There shall be a “separate offence” for lynching and the trial courts must ordinarily award maximum sentence upon conviction of the accused person to set a stern example in cases of mob violence.
- The state governments will have to designate a senior police officer in each district for taking measures to prevent incidents of mob violence and lynching.
- The state governments need to identify districts, sub-divisions and villages where instances of lynching and mob violence have been reported in the recent past.
- The nodal officers shall bring to the notice of the DGP about any inter-district co-ordination issues for devising a strategy to tackle lynching and mob violence related issues.
- Every police officer shall ensure to disperse the mob that has a tendency to cause violence in the disguise of vigilantism or otherwise.
- Central and the state governments shall broadcast on radio, television and other media platforms about the serious consequences of mob lynching and mob violence.
- Despite the measures taken by the State Police, if it comes to the notice of the local police that an incident of lynching or mob violence has taken place, the jurisdictional police station shall immediately lodge an FIR.
- The State Governments shall prepare a lynching/mob violence victim compensation scheme in the light of the provisions of Section 357A of CrPC within one month from the date of this judgment.
- If a police officer or an officer of the district administration fails to fulfil his duty, it will be considered an act of deliberate negligence.

At present there is no law that criminalises mob killings. The Indian Penal Code has provisions for unlawful assembly, rioting, and murder but nothing that takes cognisance of a group of people coming together to kill (a lynch mob).

Under Section 223 (a) of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), to prosecute together two or more people accused of the same offence committed in the course of the “same transaction”. But the provision falls far short of an adequate legal framework for prosecuting lynch mobs.

ASIAN ELECTORAL STAKEHOLDERS FORUM

The fourth edition of Asian Electoral Stakeholders Forum (AESF-IV) was held in Sri Lanka to discuss the state of elections and democracy in the region. It was jointly organised by Election Commission of Sri Lanka and Asian network for free elections (ANFREL).

Theme: **'Advancing Election Transparency and Integrity: Promoting and Defending Democracy Together'**.

HIGHLIGHTS

This was for first time AESF was held in South Asia.

OBJECTIVES

- To provide a venue for Election Management Bodies (EMBs), Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and other stakeholders to share and learn about the present electoral challenges as well as best practices in the region.
- To develop and endorse the "Colombo Strategy to Promote and Defend Electoral Democracy in Asia".
- To institutionalize capacity building efforts in making elections more meaningful and credible through cooperation among stakeholders.
- To promote inclusiveness in elections by paying special attention to sectoral cooperation.

AESF

- The AESF is the largest gathering of its kind, and is sustained through a strong cooperation between the civil society and election commissions.
- The Forum will cover a wide array of crucial election issues like the current state of democracy in Asia, the common electoral challenges in the region, and various good practices employed to make elections better.
- It provides opportunity for Asian election commissions, election observers, non-government organizations (NGOs) and interstate bodies to gather and discuss state of elections and democracy in the region.
- It also provides platform for institutionalizing capacity building efforts to pave the way for more meaningful and credible election through cooperation among stakeholders.

UNEP

Satya S Tripathi, an Indian development economist and lawyer, has been appointed assistant secretary general of the United Nations and will head the New York office of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

UNEP

- The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is an agency of United Nations and coordinates its environmental activities, assisting developing countries in implementing environmentally sound policies and practices.
- It was founded as a result of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference) in June 1972 and has its headquarters in the Gigiri neighbourhood of Nairobi, Kenya.

- UNEP has overall responsibility for environmental problems among United Nations agencies but talks on addressing global warming are overseen by the Bonn-based Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- Its activities cover a wide range of issues regarding the **atmosphere, marine and terrestrial ecosystems, environmental governance and green economy**.
- UNEP has also been active in funding and implementing environment related development projects.
- The **World Meteorological Organization and UNEP** established the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** in 1988.
- UNEP is also one of several Implementing Agencies for the **Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol**, and it is also a member of the **United Nations Development Group**.
- The **International Cyanide Management Code**, a program of best practice for the chemical's use at gold mining operations, was developed under UNEP's aegis.

LAKHWAR MULTIPURPOSE PROJECT

The Centre has signed MOU with Uttarakhand, UP, HP, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi for Construction of Lakhwar Multipurpose Project on Yamuna Near Dehradun.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Project Will Generate 300 MW of Power Create 33,780 Hectare Irrigation Potential and 78.83 MCM Water Availability.
- Uttarakhand Will Bear the Cost of Power Component, Get the Total Benefit of Power Generation.
- Centre will Fund 90% of Irrigation Component, the Six States to the Fund Remaining 10% and Share Water Proportionately.

Lakhwar Multi- Purpose Project

- Lakhwar Project is a multipurpose scheme, primarily a peaking power station, on river Yamuna in the district of Dehradun in Uttarakhand.
- The scheme envisages construction of 204 m high concrete dam on river Yamuna near Lohari village. The Multipurpose scheme also envisages construction of Vyasi HEP (2×60 MW) (Hathiari power station) downstream of Lakhwar HEP.
- The scheme also includes construction of a barrage at Katapathar about 3 Km downstream of Hathiari power station (Vyasi HEP) on river Yamuna.
- Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi are the six Upper Yamuna Basin states. Upper Yamuna refers to the stretch of River Yamuna from its origin to the Okhla Barrage in Delhi.

BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY

The Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), one of India's premier avian research institutes, has started operating its first regional centre on the campus of Wetland Research and Training Centre near Chilika Lake.

With opening up its branch in Odisha, the BNHS would be engaged in identifying the air route of the foreign birds flocking the Chilika lake during winter, sample collection, training related to bird

census, publishing bird migration atlas books, examining various diseases among the birds and to review the condition of the ***Nalabana bird sanctuary*** along with counting the birds.

CHILIKA

- It is the largest coastal lagoon in India and the second largest lagoon in the world after The New Caledonian barrier reef in New Caledonia.
- It is the largest wintering ground for migratory waterfowl found anywhere on the Indian sub-continent.
- It is one of the hotspot of biodiversity in the country, and some rare, vulnerable and endangered species listed in the IUCN Red List of threatened Animals inhabit in the lagoon for atleast part of their life cycle.
- On account of its rich bio-diversity and ecological significance, Chilika was designated as the 1st “Ramsar Site” of India.
- The Nalabana Island within the lagoon is notified as a Bird Sanctuary under Wildlife (Protection) Act, the National Wetlands, mangroves and coral reefs Committee of Ministry of Environment & Forests, Government of India, have also identified the lagoon as a priority site for conservation and management.
- Chilika Lagoon lies in the districts of Puri, Khurda and Ganjam of Odisha State along the eastern coast of India.

BNHS

- The Bombay Natural History Society, founded on 15 September 1883, is one of the largest non-governmental organisations in India engaged in conservation and biodiversity research.
- BNHS is the partner of BirdLife International in India. It has been designated as a ‘Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation’ by the Department of Science and Technology.
- Logo: The BNHS logo is the great hornbill.
- IT consultancy firm Accenture and the Bombay Natural History Society have developed Internet of Birds platform that identifies bird species found in India using Artificial Intelligence technology, including machine learning and computer vision, from digital photos that are uploaded by the public.

REVIVAL PLAN FOR CHEETAH

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

The ambitious project, conceived in 2009, had hit a roadblock for want of funds.

CONCERN

The reasons for extinction can all be traced to man’s interference. Problems like:

- Human-wildlife conflict.
- Loss of habitat and loss of prey.
- Illegal trafficking.
- The advent of climate change and growing human populations have only made these problems worse.

- With less available land for wildlife, species that require vast home range like the cheetah are placed in competition with other animals and humans, all fighting over less space.

CHEETAH REINTRODUCTION PROGRAMME IN INDIA

- The Wildlife Institute of India at Dehradun had prepared a ₹260-crore cheetah re-introduction project six years ago.
- It was estimated that an amount of ₹25 crore to ₹30 crore would be needed to build an enclosure in an area of 150 sq km for the cheetahs in Nauradehi.
- The proposal was to put the felines in the enclosure with huge boundary walls before being released in the wild.
- Nauradehi was found to be the most suitable area for the cheetahs as its forests are not very dense to restrict the fast movement of the spotted cat. Besides, the prey base for cheetahs is also in abundance at the sanctuary.
- According to the earlier action plan, around 20 cheetahs were to be translocated to Nauradehi from Namibia in Africa.
- The Namibia Cheetah Conservation Fund had then showed its willingness to donate the felines to India. However, the State was not ready to finance the plan contending that it was the Centre's project.

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 National Tiger Conservation Authority has been fulfilling its mandate within the ambit of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 for strengthening tiger conservation in the country by retaining an oversight through advisories/normative guidelines, based on appraisal of tiger status, ongoing conservation initiatives and recommendations of specially constituted Committees.

ARTICLE 35A

Article 35A of the Constitution is now being vigorously contested with its constitutional validity being challenged before the Supreme Court.

Article 35A

Article 35A is a provision incorporated in the Constitution giving the Jammu and Kashmir Legislature a carte blanche to decide who all are 'permanent residents' of the State and confer on them special rights and privileges in public sector jobs, acquisition of property in the State, scholarships and other public aid and welfare. The provision mandates that no act of the legislature coming under it can be challenged for violating the Constitution or any other law of the land.

BACKGROUND

- Article 35A was incorporated into the Constitution in 1954 by an order of the then President Rajendra Prasad on the advice of the Jawaharlal Nehru Cabinet.
- The controversial Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order of 1954 followed the 1952 Delhi Agreement entered into between Nehru and the then Prime Minister of Jammu and

Kashmir Sheikh Abdullah, which extended Indian citizenship to the 'State subjects' of Jammu and Kashmir.

- The ***Presidential Order was issued under Article 370 (1) (d) of the Constitution***. This provision allows the President to make certain "exceptions and modifications" to the Constitution for the benefit of 'State subjects' of Jammu and Kashmir.
- So, Article 35A was added to the Constitution as a testimony of the special consideration the Indian government accorded to the 'permanent residents' of Jammu and Kashmir.

REPORT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN INDIAN HIMALAYAN REGION

NITI Aayog has launched 5 Thematic Reports on Sustainable Development in Indian Himalayan Region. The reports from the five working groups discuss the significance, the challenges, the ongoing actions and a future roadmap.

CONCERNS

Nearly 30% of springs crucial to water security of people are drying and 50% have reported reduced discharge. Himalayan Tourism growing annually at 6.8% has created huge challenge related to solid waste, water, traffic, loss of bio-cultural diversity etc.

BACKGROUND

Recognizing the uniqueness of the Himalayas and the challenges for sustainable development, NITI Aayog had set up 5 Working Groups (WGs) in June 2017 to prepare a roadmap for actions in 5 thematic areas.

The themes include:

- a) Inventory and Revival of Springs in Himalayas for Water Security.
- b) Sustainable Tourism in Indian Himalayan Region.
- c) Transformative Approach to Shifting Cultivation.
- d) Strengthening Skill & Entrepreneurship Landscape in Himalayas.
- e) Data/Information for Informed Decision Making.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Spring Mapping and Revival, using 8 steps protocol be taken up across Himalayan States in phased manner.
- Apply carrying capacity concept to all major tourist destinations; implement and monitor tourism sector Standards and apply performance based incentives for States faring well on the standards.
- Assessment of nature & extent of Shifting Cultivation area, improved policy coherence, strengthened tenurial security & improved access to related programs/schemes are other key recommendations to transform shifting cultivation.
- Strengthening of skill & entrepreneurship will require focus on identified priority sectors where mountains have advantage, investment in trainers, assessors and training centers in industry partnership.
- Having a Central Data Management Agency for Himalayas to provide data with high fidelity scenario while addressing data sharing, access, authenticity and comparability issues will go a long way in addressing data related issues.

- Setting up of a ***Himalayan Authority*** for coordinated and holistic development of entire Himalayan region.
- Launching of “***Himalaya Calling***”: An Awareness to Action Campaign as people’s movement.
- Setting up of ***Mission on Spring Water Management in Himalayas, National Mission/Program on Transforming Shifting Cultivation in North Eastern States, demand driven network of skill and entrepreneurship development Centers*** in Himalayan States among others.

ICOMOS

The ICOMOS, a global monument conservation body, has launched an initiative to assess the damage to the rich cultural and built heritage in flood-devastated Kerala and set up an emergency response platform.

The initiative also aims at setting up a platform for emergency response to the cultural heritage damaged by the floods in Kerala.

ICOMOS has also approached the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM) to partner in the post-disaster work.

ICOMOS

- The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) is a prestigious non-government organisation.
- It promotes the application of theory, methodology and scientific techniques for conservation of architectural and archaeological heritage across the world.
- ICOMOS is also an advisory body to the UNESCO for cultural heritage, in particular for implementation of the World Heritage Convention.
- Rome-based ICCROM is an inter-governmental organisation dedicated to the preservation of cultural heritage worldwide through training, information, research, cooperation and advocacy programmes.

TReDS PLATFORM

State-owned aerospace and defence PSU Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has executed its first digitised invoice discounting transaction on RXIL TReDS platform when it accepted the digital invoice.

- This makes HAL the first PSU (public sector unit) to transact on TReDS across platforms.
- RXIL, India’s first TReDS platform, enables MSMEs to gain control of their receivables with enhanced visibility and timeliness.

TReDS

- TReDS is an online electronic institutional mechanism for facilitating the financing of trade receivables of MSMEs through multiple financiers.
- The TReDS Platform will enable discounting of invoices/bills of exchange of MSME Sellers against large Corporates including Govt. Departments and PSUs, through an auction mechanism, to ensure prompt realization of trade receivables at competitive market rates.

FEATURES OF TReDS

- Unified platform for Sellers, Buyers and Financiers.

- Eliminates Paper.
- Easy Access to Funds.
- Transact Online.
- Competitive Discount Rates.
- Seamless Data Flow.
- Standardised Practices.

CERT-In

The Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) has prepared a report on cyber attacks in the country.

HIGHLIGHTS

- It has been observed that China continues to “intrude” Indian cyberspace in a “significant” way.
- The cyber-attacks from China made up 35% of the total number of cyber-attacks on official Indian websites, followed by US (17%), Russia (15%), Pakistan (9%), Canada (7%) and Germany (5%).
- There is also the possibility of “malicious actors from Pakistan using German and Canadian cyberspace for intruding into Indian cyberspace and carrying out malicious activities”.
- They are targeting by sending spear phishing emails with malware attachments.
- Phishing attacks are usually in the form of an email from a trusted source where they ask for personal details such as bank details personal details, passwords.
- Many of the institutions impacted by the malicious activities have been identified, and they have been advised to take appropriate preventive action.
- These include Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC), National Informatics Centre (NIC), Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), Railways, Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS) and some banks like Punjab National Bank among others.

CERT-In

CERT-In (the Indian Computer Emergency Response Team) is a government-mandated information technology (IT) security organization. CERT-In was created by the Indian Department of Information Technology in 2004 and operates under the auspices of that department.

The purpose of CERT-In is to respond to computer security incidents, report on vulnerabilities and promote effective IT security practices throughout the country. According to the provisions of the Information Technology Amendment Act 2008, CERT-In is responsible for overseeing administration of the Act.

CURBING SEXUAL VIOLENCE

A high-level meeting was recently convened to discuss recommendations on ways to curb “sexual violence” videos involving women and children.

- It was decided in the meeting that the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) would be the designated nodal agency for monitoring the complaints received on a government portal that records child pornography and sexual violence videos.
- The NCRB would coordinate with service providers such as Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp and ask them to block malicious videos and contents.

- NCRB is only a crime record agency.
- Therefore, a government notification has been issued under the Information Technology Act, 2000 to enable it to take actions against such videos. Now, whenever such incidents are reported, it can write to service providers and ask them to block the content.

NCRB

- NCRB is the Nodal Agency for authentic source of Data on crime, accidents, suicides, and prisons for policy matters and research.
- It was set-up in 1986 to function as a repository of information on crime and criminals so as to assist the investigators in linking crime to the perpetrators.
- It was set up based on the recommendations of the National Police Commission (1977-1981) and the MHA's Task force (1985).
- It was set up by merging the Directorate of Coordination and Police Computer (DCPC), Inter State Criminals Data Branch of CBI, Central Finger Print Bureau of CBI, and Statistical Branch of BPR&D.
- Bureau is implementing & monitoring agency for implementation of Crime & Criminal Tracking Network System (CCTNS), a Mission Mode Project under the National e-Governance Plan of Government of India.
- The project aims at creating a comprehensive and integrated system for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of policing in the country.
- NCRB also imparts training in Information Technology (IT) and Finger Print Science for Indian Police Officers as well Foreign Police officers. Central finger print bureau is under the administrative control of NCRB.
- NCRB publishes 4 annual publications on **Crime, Accidental Deaths & Suicides, Prison Statistics and Finger Prints**. These publications serve as principal reference points on crime statistics not only police officers but also for criminologists, researchers, media and policy makers not only in India but abroad well.

INDIA WAGE REPORT

The International Labour Organization has published India Wage Report.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Real average daily wages in India almost doubled in the first two decades after economic reforms, but low pay and wage inequality remains a serious challenge to inclusive growth.
- Overall, in 2009-10, a third of all of wage workers were paid less than the national minimum wage, which is merely indicative and not legally binding. That includes 41% of all casual workers and 15% of salaried workers.
- In 2011-12, the average wage in India was about ₹247 rupees a day, almost double the 1993-94 figure of ₹128. However, average labour productivity (as measured by GDP per worker) increased more rapidly than real average wages. Thus, India's labour share — or the proportion of national income which goes into labour compensation, as opposed to capital or landowners — has declined.
- The rise in average wages was more rapid in rural areas, and for casual workers. However, these groups started at such a low base that a yawning wage gap still remains. Thus, the average wage of casual workers — who make 62% of the earning population — was only ₹143 a day.

- Daily wages in urban areas (₹384) also remain more than twice as high as those in rural areas (₹175). Regional disparities in average wages have actually increased over time, with wages rising more rapidly in high-wage States than in low-wage ones.
- The gender wage gap decreased from 48% in 1993-94 to 34% in 2011-12, but still remains high by international standards. And of all worker groups, the average wages of casual rural female workers were lowest at just ₹104 a day.

INTERNATIONAL AIR CONNECTIVITY SCHEME

The centre has unveiled the draft International Air Connectivity (IAC) scheme.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The scheme envisages to increase the international ticketing to 20 crore by 2027.
- The scheme is to be made operational only for states, which demonstrate their commitment to implement and provide the requisite support for promoting operations under the scheme.
- According to the draft, state governments will identify the routes to be connected, and airline operators will assess demand on the identified routes and submit proposals for providing connectivity.
- Operations under the scheme will be permitted through fixed-wing aircraft only with more than 70 seats.
- The scheme has proposed to set up an International Air Connectivity Fund (IACF) — a dedicated fund for providing subsidy support under the scheme. It will be created through the contributions of state governments.
- The subsidy support shall be provided to selected airlines only for the passenger seats, which remain unsold at the time of IAC flight operation, from the total number of passenger seats for which subsidy has been requested by the selected airline as part of its proposal. The subsidy support will be extended only up to three years.
- The Airport Authority of India will be the implementing agency of the scheme.

PETCOKE

India has banned the import of pet coke for use as fuel, but has allowed shipments for use as feedstock in some industries.

Import of pet coke is allowed for only cement, lime kiln, calcium carbide and gasification industries, when used as the feedstock or in the manufacturing process on actual user condition.

CONCERNS

The petcoke burned in factories and plants is contributing to dangerously filthy air in India, which already has many of the world's most polluted cities. It contains 17 times more sulfur than the limit set for coal, and a staggering 1,380 times more than for diesel.

BACKGROUND

As the world's largest consumer of pet coke, India imports over half its annual pet coke consumption of about 27 million tonnes, mainly from the United States. Local producers include Indian Oil Corp, Reliance Industries and Bharat Petroleum Corp.

India is the world's biggest consumer of petroleum coke, which is a dark solid carbon material that emits 11% more greenhouse gases than coal. Usage of pet coke, a dirtier alternative to coal, in the energy-hungry country has come under scrutiny due to rising pollution levels in major cities.

PETCOKE

Petroleum coke, the bottom-of-the-barrel leftover from refining Canadian tar sands crude and other heavy oils, is cheaper and burns hotter than coal. But it also contains more planet-warming carbon and far more heart- and lung-damaging sulphur.

DATA LOCALISATION

US technology giants plan to intensify lobbying efforts against stringent Indian data localisation requirements, which they say will undermine their growth ambitions in India.

BACKGROUND

U.S trade groups, representing companies such as Amazon, American Express and Microsoft, have opposed India's push to store data locally. That push comes amid rising global efforts to protect user data but is one that could hit planned investments by the firms in the Indian market, where the companies currently have limited data storage.

CONCERNS

Though a final decision hasn't been made, the deliberations come while the United States and India are locked in a dispute over US tariff increases and on the Indian policy of capping prices of medical devices, which hurts American pharmaceutical companies. The issue could further undermine already strained economic relations between India and the United States.

DATA LOCALISATION

- Data localization is the act of storing data on any device that is physically present within the borders of a specific country where the data was generated.
- Free flow of digital data, especially data which could impact government operations or operations in a region, is restricted by some governments. Policy goals:
- Goals set in the Draft National Digital Communications Policy 2018, along with various government notifications and guidelines such as Reserve Bank of India's notification on Payment Data Storage 2018, and the Guidelines for Government Departments for Contractual Terms related to Cloud Storage 2017, show signs of data localisation.
- The rationale behind such mandates has been attributed to various factors, such as: securing citizen's data, data privacy, data sovereignty, national security, and economic development of the country. The extensive data collection by technology companies, due to their unfettered access and control of user data, has allowed them to freely process and monetise Indian users' data outside the country.

11TH WORLD HINDI CONFERENCE

11th World Hindi Conference is being held at Mauritius.

Theme: "***Vaishvik Hindi Aur Bharatiy Sanskriti***".

HIGHLIGHTS

- The event, held once in three years, is dedicated to Hindi language. It sees participation from Hindi scholars, writers and laureates from different parts of the world who contribute to the language.
- The decision to organize the 11th edition of the Conference in Mauritius was taken at the 10th World Hindi Conference held in Bhopal, India in September 2015.
- The first World Hindi Conference was held in 1975 in Nagpur, India. Since then, ten such Conferences have been held in different parts of the world.
- The MEA has also set up the World Hindi Secretariat in Mauritius. The main objective of the WHS is to promote Hindi as an international language and further its cause for recognition at the United Nations as an Official Language.

PROMPT CORECTIVE ACTION FRAMEWORK

PSU banks are expected to come out of the Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework by the end of this year. Currently, 11 out of a total of 21 state-owned banks are under the RBI's Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework.

Various measures taken by the government including implementation of Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) has yielded good results in terms of reining bad loans and increasing recovery.

PCA

- PCA norms allow the regulator to place certain restrictions such as halting branch expansion and stopping dividend payment.
- It can even cap a bank's lending limit to one entity or sector.
- Other corrective action that can be imposed on banks include special audit, restructuring operations and activation of recovery plan.
- Banks' promoters can be asked to bring in new management, too. The RBI can also supersede the bank's board, under PCA.
- The PCA is invoked when certain risk thresholds are breached.
- There are three risk thresholds which are based on certain levels of ***asset quality, profitability, capital*** and the like. The third such threshold, which is maximum tolerance limit, sets net ***NPA at over 12%*** and negative return on assets for four consecutive years.
- There are two type of restrictions, mandatory and discretionary.
- Restrictions on dividend, branch expansion, directors compensation, are mandatory while discretionary restrictions could include curbs on lending and deposit. In the cases of two banks where PCA was invoked after the revised guidelines were issued — IDBI Bank and UCO Bank — only mandatory restrictions were imposed. Both the banks breached risk threshold 2.

PARTICIPATORY NOTES

Investments through participatory notes into Indian capital markets have plunged to over nine-year low of Rs 80,341 crore till July-end amid stringent norms put in place by the watchdog SEBI to check misuse of these instruments.

The decline could be attributed to several measures taken by the market watchdog to stop the misuse of the controversy-ridden participatory notes.

In July 2017, Sebi had notified stricter norms stipulating a fee of USD 1,000 on each instrument to check any misuse for channelizing black money. It had also prohibited FPIs from issuing such notes where the underlying asset is a derivative, except those which are used for hedging purposes.

These measures were an outcome of a slew of other steps taken by the regulator in the recent past. In April last year, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) had barred resident Indians, NRIs and entities owned by them from making investment through P-notes.

P-NOTES

- These are used by overseas market participants that don't want to get registered as FIIs.
- P-notes are not issued in India, rather these are issued by an India registered FII to other overseas investors.
- The FII will be the entity to initiate a transaction in our stock markets, which could be on behalf of foreign clients.
- P-notes are then issued by the FII to the client, underlining that the securities are held on behalf of the client albeit in the name of the FII.
- The P-note holder is entitled to all the dividends, capital gains and other pay outs on the underlying securities.
- FIIs have to periodically report to SEBI on P-note issuance without the need to name the final beneficiary.
- P-Notes are worrying is because of the anonymous nature of the instrument as these investors could be beyond the reach of Indian regulators.
- Further, there is a view that it is being used in money laundering with wealthy Indians, like the promoters of companies, using it to bring back unaccounted funds and to manipulate their stock prices.

18TH ASIAN GAMES

The 18th edition of Asian Games is being held in Jakarta, Indonesia.

- For the first time, eSports, a form of competition using video games, and canoe polo will be contested as demonstration sports.
- This will be the second time that Indonesia hosts the Asian Games.
- This will be the first time that the Asian Games will be held in two cities – Jakarta and Palembang.

BACKGROUND

- The Asian Games, also known as Asiad, is a continental multi-sport event held every four years between athletes from all over Asia.
- Since 1982, the Games have been organised by the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA). Prior to that, the Games were regulated by the Asian Games Federation (AGF).
- The Games are the second largest multi-sport event after the Olympic Games.
- The last edition of the Games was hosted by Incheon, South Korea in October 2014.

INTERPRETATION CENTRE TO PROTECT CROCODILES

The Odisha government is setting up a world-class interpretation centre at Dangamal near Bhitarkanika National Park to showcase its efforts in protecting crocodiles and preserving its rich mangrove diversity.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The centre will be developed both as a tourist attraction and a place for students to learn about the environment.
- The project, which has been approved under the Integrated Coastal Zone Management Project, will be taken up at an estimated cost of ₹3 crore.
- Bhitarkanika, one of the State's finest biodiversity hotspots, receives close to one lakh visitors every year. The tourist inflow has seen an increase lately.
- The park is famous for its green mangroves, migratory birds, turtles, estuarine crocodiles and countless creeks.
- It is said to house 70% of the country's estuarine or saltwater crocodiles, conservation of which was started way back in 1975.

'BAULA' PROJECT

- 'Baula' is the Oriya term for Saltwater Crocodile.
- At Dangmal in Bhitarkanika sanctuary, salt-water crocodile eggs have been collected locally; and young crocodiles have been released in the creeks and the estuaries; and more than 2200 crocodiles have been released in phases since 1977.
- This operation has been reasonably successful and the crocodile population in the Bhitarkanika river system has gradually been built up. Above 50 released female Saltwater Crocodiles have laid eggs in the wild and bred successfully.
- The annual census conducted in the river systems of Bhitarkanika wildlife sanctuary in January 2004 indicated that there were 1308 Saltwater crocodiles and is on increasing trend.

GHARIAL

- Critically Endangered.
- Habitat — foremost flowing rivers with high sand banks that they use for basking and building nests.
- Gharials once inhabited all the major river systems of the Indian Subcontinent, from the Irrawaddy River in the east to the Indus River in the west.
- Their distribution is now limited to only 2% of their former range.
- India: Girwa River, Chambal River, Ken River, Son River, Mahanadi River, Ramganga River.
- Nepal: Rapti-Narayani River.
- Schedule 1 species under Indian wildlife act, 1972.
- Project Crocodile began in 1975 (Government of India+ United Nations Development Fund + Food and Agriculture Organization) — intensive captive breeding and rearing program.

CYBER ATTACK

The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has said the recent incident of cyber-attack in Pune-based Cosmos Cooperative Bank, that has caused an over ₹90-crore loss, is due to a malware attack on the bank's system.

HIGHLIGHTS

Malware is defined as a software designed to perform an unwanted illegal act via the computer network. It could be also defined as software with malicious intent. Malware can be classified based on how they get executed, how they spread, and/or what they do. Some of them are discussed below.

- a) **Virus:** A virus is a program that can infect other programs by modifying them to include a possible evolved copy of itself. A virus can spread throughout a computer or network using the authorization of every user using it to infect their program. Every program so infected may also act as a virus and thus the infection grows. Viruses normally affect program files, but in some cases, they also affect data files disrupting the use of data and destroying them completely.
- b) **Worms:** Worms are also disseminated through computer networks, unlike viruses, computer worms are malicious programs that copy themselves from system to system, rather than infiltrating legitimate files. For example, a mass mailing e-mail worm is a worm that sends copies of itself via e-mail. A network worm, on the other hand makes copies of itself throughout a network, thus disrupting an entire network.
- c) **Trojans:** Trojan is another form of Malware, trojans do things other than what is expected by the user. Trojan or trojan horse is a program that generally impairs the security of a system. Trojans are used to create back-doors (a program that allows outside access into a secure network) on computers belonging to a secure network so that a hacker can have access to the secure network.

Unlike viruses, Trojan horses do not replicate themselves but they can be just as destructive. One of the most insidious types of Trojan horse is a program that claims to rid your computer of viruses but instead introduces viruses onto your computer.

- d) **Hoax:** Hoax is an e-mail that warns the user of a certain system that is harming the computer. The message thereafter instructs the user to run a procedure (most often in the form of a download) to correct the harming system. When this program is run, it invades the system and deletes an important file.
- e) **Spyware:** Spyware invades a computer and, as its name implies, monitors a user's activities without consent. Spywares are usually forwarded through unsuspecting e-mails with bonafide e-mail i.ds. Spyware continues to infect millions of computers globally.

NPCI

- National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) is an umbrella organization for all retail payments system in India.
- It was set up with the guidance and support of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Indian Banks' Association (IBA).
- NPCI has ten promoter banks.
- Its recent work of developing Unified Payments Interface aims to move India to a cashless society with only digital transactions.
- It has successfully completed the development of a domestic card payment network called RuPay, reducing the dependency on international card schemes.

FACTS

- **INNOVATION CELL:** Innovation cell is MHRD's initiative established at AICTE with a purpose to systematically foster the culture of Innovation in all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) across the country.
- The primary mandate of Innovation Cell is to encourage, inspire and nurture young students by exposing them to new ideas and processes resulting in innovative activities in their formative years fostered through Network of Innovation clubs in Higher Educational Institutions.
- 'Call for Code' initiative: It is an initiative launched by Global IT giant IBM in partnership with Indian IT companies. The aim is to build global solutions for disaster management. It also aims to bring start-up, academic and enterprise developers together to respond to and recover from natural disasters.
- India's first biofuel-powered plane: India has now joined the small league of nations with the US and Australia to have flown a biofuel-powered aircraft. SpiceJet flew the Bombardier Q400 (VT-SUI) on biofuel from Dehradun to Delhi. The biofuel is made partially from renewable resources such as agricultural residues, non-edible oils and bio-degradable fractions of industrial and municipal wastes.
- "Kowsar": It is a new domestically-produced fighter jet unveiled recently by Iran. Designed and manufactured solely by Iranian military experts, the Kowsar is described as a fourth-generation fighter jet, which classifies it among military fighters in service from approximately 1980 to the present day. Iran is currently under economic and diplomatic pressure from a raft of sanctions reimposed by the United States earlier this month, and the unveiling could be seen as a bid to show self-sufficiency and military might in the face of that pressure.
- Lemons problem in economics: The idea was first proposed by American economist George Akerlof in his popular 1970 paper, "The market for lemons: Quality uncertainty and the market mechanism". It refers to a form of adverse selection wherein there is a degradation in the quality of products sold in the marketplace due to asymmetry in the amount of information available to buyers and sellers. Since sellers typically know more about any defects in the products that they sell to buyers, there is an opportunity for the sellers in the marketplace to sell low-quality products to unaware buyers.
- 'Panini Language Laboratory' has been set up at Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI) in Mauritius. The lab, gifted by the Indian government, will help MGI in teaching Indian languages in Mauritius. It aims to promote reading and writing Hindi amongst young generation and its further development. It will serve as medium to generate more interest in learning Hindi amongst youngsters thereby strengthening language.
- The Supreme Court has accepted the Centre's proposal to use hologram-based coloured stickers on vehicles, plying in the Delhi-National Capital Region (NCR), to indicate the nature of the fuel used. The **Hologram-based sticker of light-blue colour will be used for petrol and CNG-run vehicles**. Sticker of **orange colour will be used for diesel**-driven vehicles.